

VESSELIN TRAIKOV

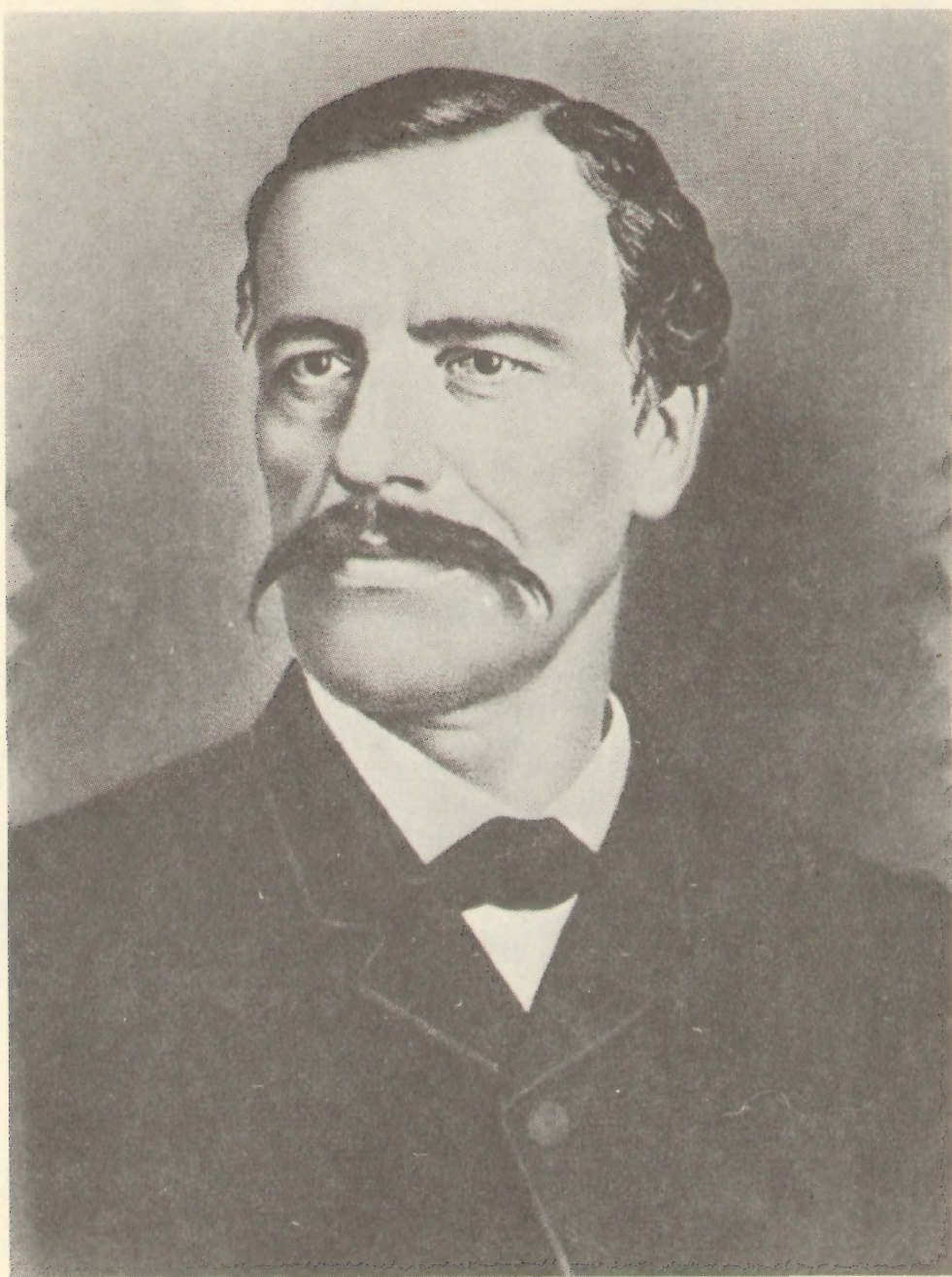
GEORGI  
RAKOVSKI

A Short Biography



SOFIA PRESS





*Portrait of G. S. Rakovski*

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GEORGI STOIKOV RAKOVSKI is widely known in Bulgaria as the founder of the organized Bulgarian national-liberation movement. His activity is closely connected with a whole new stage in the history of the Bulgarian National Revival. This passionate and ardent revolutionary was a versatile personality: he was a poet, journalist, historian, ethnographer, numismatist, diplomat, student of folklore, linguist. In addition to this his efforts to establish unity and understanding among the Balkan nations made him also one of the most outstanding politicians of the Balkans in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Rakovski was born and grew up in a period of great unrest among his fellow countrymen — the Bulgarians, and among the other enslaved Balkan nations in the Ottoman Empire. It was a time that followed the turbulent years about the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, years full of internecine struggles within the Empire and of mass devastations by the kurdjalis.<sup>1</sup>

This was a time when, due to objective processes of

<sup>1</sup> Kurdjalis — gangs of Ottoman deserters and robbers who in the 19th century attacked, plundered and destroyed Christian towns and villages in the Empire.

radical change in the socio-economic life of the Balkans, where capitalist relations were gaining headway, the pillars of the feudal order were being destroyed.

At the same time, a series of new events contributed to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. After the first and second Serbian uprisings, in 1821 broke out the Greek uprising which led to the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829. As a result of its military defeat, the Ottoman Empire was obliged to accept the autonomy of Serbia, to recognize the independence of Greece, to withdraw its troops from Wallachia and Moldova. The situation was further aggravated by the Turkish-Egyptian conflict during the period of 1831-1833. Thus, the political and military impotence of the Empire became obvious.

Life required the introduction of changes in the economy, in land ownership, in the state apparatus. Sultan Mahmud II, who died in 1839, was succeeded by his son Abdul Medjit. The latter decreed the Hattisherif of Gülhané, known as the beginning of the Tanzimat — the epoch of reforms. The following years led to ever greater interference by the European Powers both in the domestic and in the foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire: the regime of the Straits, the conflicts in Syria and Lebanon, the situation of the enslaved Christian nations, the Ottoman-Persian conflict, etc. Thus the Ottoman Empire assumed gradually the aspect of a semi-colony. Within the country new laws continued being enacted, centuries-old institutions were being reformed. The reforms, however, were slow in reaching the provinces: the local administrators, the Moslem clergy and



the great numbers of reactionary-minded Ottoman farmers ('old Turks') foiled every attempt at reform. The situation of the Christians remained unchanged, unbearable, and that is why in the '30s and the beginning of the '40s of the nineteenth century, a number of uprisings broke out in Niš, Crete, Cyprus, etc.

Life in the sub-Balkan town of Kotel in which Rakovski was born, constituted no exception to the general development on the Balkans. Sheep-breeding had been the main occupation of the population for a long time. Several wealthy citizens in Kotel possessed each as many as several thousands of sheep which were taken out to graze in the pastures of Thrace, North Bulgaria and, above all, in the Dobroudja. In Kotel there were prominent cattle-dealers who supplied cattle to the State, as well as tax-collectors who collected the tax on sheep and goats. Thus, a chorbadji<sup>1</sup> class in Kotel got consolidated, consisting of money lenders, owners of big cattle herds, cattle-dealers, tax-collectors. They held all financial means, the common treasury, they distributed the taxes as they wished, in close collaboration with the Ottoman authorities and the Greek clergy. At the same time the handicrafts developed rapidly in the town: large quantities of aba (coarse home-spun cloth), carpets, frieze, etc., were produced. Because of their economic interests, both traders and craftsmen wished to have a peaceful and quiet life, craved for more freedom and security in the country. These aspirations made them

1 chorbadji — rich man, master, boss in the Ottoman Empire.

stand out as a progressive social group. Traders and craftsmen were not alone in these aspirations. The peasants who were the most numerous and the most oppressed part of the nation, suffering cruelly under the exploitation of the feudal lords, of the foreign clergy and of their own chorbadjis, sided with them. It was quite natural that traders and craftsmen should strive to assume a leading role in the life of the town. Stimulated by the people's plight, they entered into conflict with the chorbadjis, who until then had been undisputed leaders in Bulgarian public life. Refusing to put up with the irresponsible attitude of the old rulers, they strove to exercise control over the expenditure of the public funds, to participate in the management of the churches and schools. It was thus that a fierce struggle began, which was of great importance for the future destiny of Rakovski and his family. Being essentially a class struggle, it caused boundless sufferings and brought about great misfortunes which produced a profound impact on the life and activity of the future revolutionary.

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Georgi Stoikov Rakovski was born in the spring of 1821 in a family that kept alive the old revolutionary traditions and a spirit of independence. His grandfather Subi was widely known throughout the whole district for his stern character. Two of his uncles, Dacho and Matei, took active part in the struggles against the kurdjalis. These struggles were closely linked with the widespread anarchy in the Ottoman Empire.



Dacho was one of the chief leaders of the people in their resistance against lawlessness and cruelty. Heading a large detachment of resolute Kotel citizens, Dacho attacked and defeated the bands of the notorious kurdjali leaders, Karafeiz and Indjé, and thereby saved the town from destruction — a fate which had already befallen many other prosperous towns and villages at that time. Rakovski's youngest Uncle Minko took part in the battles in Wallachia in 1821 on the side of the Romanian national hero Tudor Vladimirescu. Captured by the Ottoman troops, he died later in an Istanbul prison. Rakovski's father, Stoiko Popovich, was at first a simple tailor, but being endowed with a keen mind and enterprising spirit, and with a strong sense of dignity, he advanced rapidly. On several occasions he defended successfully his fellow townsmen against the arbitrary actions of the Ottoman administration, thus winning the gratitude of the population. The Turkish authorities, on their part, gave him the right to wear a scarlet coat — a colour reserved at that time only for the rulers. Later on Stoiko Popovich took part in the struggles between the wealthy Bulgarians, collaborators of the Ottoman government known as chorbadjis, on the one side, and the people — craftsmen and farmers, on the other, siding with his poor fellow townsmen. In this way he incurred the anger of the wealthy Kotel chorbadjis. While still a child, Rakovski was a witness of these struggles and had the opportunity to observe the proud character and independent spirit of his father. Not less strongly, however, was the future revolutionary influenced by the relatives on his mother's



side. As a small child he saw his uncle, the glorious Captain Georgi Mamarchev being awarded a high Russian order and a sword for his heroism: he had distinguished himself as a brave fighter during the capture of Silistra in the Russo-Turkish war in 1828-1829. Later he organized the uprising in the Turnovo district in 1835. Quite naturally, the future Bulgarian revolutionary was growing up in an atmosphere imbued with bitter hatred for the foreign oppressors.

Rakovski went first to school in his native town and then in Karlovo where Raino Popovich, the well-known Bulgarian Hellenist of that time, was his teacher. In 1837 Rakovski's father took him to Istanbul where he enrolled as student in the famous Greek highschool at Kuru chershmé. The school was one of the best organized Greek educational institutions at that time. Eminent Greek scholars had graduated from that school and many young Bulgarians of good families were studying there. Rakovski's name then was Sava Stephanidis and that is how he signed the letters to his old teacher Raino Popovich, to whom he wrote about many of his schooltime experiences. He wrote in Greek. He could express himself well in that language, but it is obvious that he was still not satisfied with his achievements along this line. The course of studies was very serious; the curriculum included the following subjects: mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography, philosophy, rhetoric, theology, poetics. The Greek classics Demosthenes, Xenophanes, Thucydides, Herodotus were also studied. Particular attention was paid to the study of languages. Apart from ancient Greek and Latin the pupils



studied French, too, whereas Rakovski also studied Arabic and Persian, for such was the explicit desire of his patron, the eminent Kotel citizen Prince Stephanaki Bogoridi, who had risen to the post of Counsellor to the Turkish sultan. All this comes to show that the young Bulgarian received a very solid classical education at that time, which fact gave him many advantages under the existing circumstances and secured him a calm and brilliant future career. Rakovski, however, was evidently not attracted by the undisturbed career of a prosperous civil servant in the Ottoman Empire, and while still a schoolboy his emotions and inclinations already hinted at the direction which his future life was to assume.

Long before the struggle of the Bulgarians for church independence had flared up, heated discussions were taking place in the Istanbul high school between the Greek and Bulgarian school students. Rakovski played an important role in these debates, for he extolled the past of the Bulgarian people and their valuable characteristic traits. A frequent subject of their talks and discussions was the situation in Bulgaria. What the young patriot felt and thought at that time can best be seen in his letters to his beloved teacher Raino Popovich. For example, they commented on the Greek clergy at that time, which, in the words of Rakovski, 'milks our poor Bulgarians'. Moreover, the future outstanding revolutionary was wholeheartedly inspired by thoughts of 'our once wonderful and glorious nation'.

It was right there at the Greek school, in an entirely Greek environment that Rakovski manifested his

patriotism. He was among the first to take part in the struggle for Bulgarian enlightenment and Bulgarian clergy which was just beginning. His joy at the progress of Bulgarian education was spontaneous and natural. He was delighted to see that due to the efforts of the eminent Odessa Bulgarian, Vassil Aprilov, the setting up of a Bulgarian printing house in Gabrovo was being organized, that a history of the Bulgarians written by the Russian scholar Venelin was published, that at the Athens Secondary School and University about twenty Bulgarians were studying, 'who were ready to sacrifice their whole life for the enlightenment of our people'.

It was about this time that Rakovski fell under the powerful influence of the Kotel citizen Neophit Bozveli, who headed the struggle for Bulgarian church independence. With his fanatical hatred of the Greek Phanariot<sup>1</sup> clergy, with his ardent patriotism and his dauntless militant spirit, Neophit exerted a decisive influence on his young townsman.

Meanwhile Rakovski was also in touch with the Bulgarians studying in the Greek capital. He discussed with them the problem of setting up in Athens a Bulgarian revolutionary organization called 'Macedonian Society' whose task would be to fight for bettering the plight of the Homeland. There were already two similar Greek societies, in Thessaly and Epirus.

1 Phanariot — influential Istanbul Greek, mostly a clergyman, who persecuted in every possible manner the Bulgarian National Revival in the 19th century. The name comes from Phanar, a city ward in Istanbul.



It was again at this time that Rakovski was in touch with another outstanding Bulgarian, Ilarion Makariopolski, who later in turn headed the struggle for church independence. Having learned that an uprising had broken out in Crete, that Greek rebel captains were headed for the Thessalian border, that there was also an uprising along the border of Serbia, the two revolutionary patriots proceeded to action: Ilarion set out for Turnovo, and Rakovski, who in the meantime had heard of some movement amid the Bulgarians in Braila, sailed off for this big Romanian harbour.

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Rakovski's peaceful life came to an end. The young patriot embarked resolutely on a new road — the road of the armed struggle, from which he never swerved. On reaching the estuary of the Danube he learned that, in the meantime, the revolt in Braila had broken out and had been cruelly crushed by the authorities. Undaunted, Rakovski continued his journey to Braila where he arrived on August 7, 1841. He soon established contacts with Stavros Giorgiu Balakostas, a citizen of Epirus, member of the Greek revolutionary Thessalian-Epirus Society, who had just arrived from Athens. The two of them worked out a plan for a new liberation movement. Stavros was to head the Greeks, Rakovski — the Bulgarians. The members of the organization maintained constant contact with Galatz and Bessarabia. They also had numerous contacts with the Bulgarian emigrants in the different towns of Wallachia

and Moldova, as well as with the Greek revolutionary circles in Athens and Epirus.

The Bulgarian colony in Braila at that time was pretty large; there were also many Greeks there, mainly sailors. Rakovski who had assumed the name of Georgi Macedon became a teacher of French, Greek and Turkish, which is why he became soon popular all over the town as 'the schoolmaster'. Rakovski's teaching post was a camouflage for his feverish revolutionary activity. He managed quickly to organize the new movement. The pubs and coffee-houses in the outskirts of the town were the campaigning sites. The young ardent revolutionary counted on the poor emigrants: craftsmen, petty clerks, sailors, fishermen, stevedores, coffee-house keepers, inn-keepers, market-gardeners, servants. Their aim was to organize a big armed band, which should cross the Danube and rouse the people in a mass uprising against the oppressor. Their plan envisaged the arrival of about 1,000-2,000 armed Bulgarians from Bessarabia in Galatz where they were to join other groups of Bulgarians, who were to come from various towns in Moldova. From Galatz they had quickly to set out for Braila, where they were to cross the Danube. The plotters did not think of shedding blood. They wanted to induce the Romanian authorities, with their impressive number, to grant them free passage to the south, where they planned to make their fellow-countrymen rise up in arms en masse.

Their plot was, however, prematurely discovered. In the evening on February 10, 1842, the authorities wanted to arrest Rakovski and the other leaders. A skirmish ensued,



during which the plotters in self-defence killed a Romanian officer. The authorities arrested 15 of the plotters, but Georgi Macedon-Rakovski, Stavros Balakostas and another of the leaders, by the name of Captain Spiru, were not tracked down. Rakovski went into hiding, but having understood that innocent people had been arrested, he decided to give himself up in order to save them. That same night the Bulgarian revolutionary was sent under very strong guard to Bucharest where a specially set up committee began interrogating the participants in the revolt. It became evident that Rakovski was the central figure in the plot. His evidence showed that he tried to vindicate all those who had been arrested and to lay the blame on those who had managed to escape and were now far away, living in hiding. The interrogation lasted long and finally the judicial divan in Wallachia sentenced six people to death, including Rakovski. A decree dated June 14, 1842, confirmed the verdict. One circumstance, however, saved the life of the great Bulgarian revolutionary. According to the regime of capitulations, foreign subjects in the Ottoman Empire and its vassal countries (Wallachia was one of them) could be punished only in those countries whose subjects they were. At that time Rakovski possessed a Greek passport, so he had to be delivered to the Greek authorities for the execution of his sentence. After long discussions on Rakovski's verdict between the Greek diplomatic agencies in Bucharest, Istanbul and Athens, it was finally ruled that Rakovski should be saved by being sent for some time somewhere far away. That was done: on August 3, 1842,

he was put on board a Greek ship and sent via Istanbul to Marseilles. The young revolutionary learned to know the free life of France in the big French Mediterranean port town. He realized how important it was for the progress of a nation to be independent. His enslaved homeland, however, was in his mind all the time, and after about one year he set out back for Bulgaria.

On his way to Bulgaria Rakovski stopped in Athens for some time, and after that went to Istanbul where he met some Bulgarian friends from whom he received detailed information about the church struggle. He continued his journey to Bulgaria, and via Turnovo returned to his native town after several years of absence.

The atmosphere in Kotel at that time was tense. The quarrel between chorbadjis and tradesmen had strongly increased. The local chorbadjis, availing themselves of the situation, had seized the common treasury and collected the state taxes arbitrarily, thus growing rich at the expense of the population. The suffering people approached Rakovski's father Stoiko Popovich, as an old and wise townsman, to mediate for them and ask the chorbadjis to give an account of the public funds they had usurped. Stoiko obtained a flat refusal and so, together with six other Kotel citizens, he left for Vidin, Kotel's administrative centre at that time, to beg the Ottoman authorities to send a special man to Kotel to establish the real situation. The chorbadjis who were afraid that their lawless actions would come to light, and egged on by the Greek Phanariot bishops in Preslav and Turnovo, who likewise had no desire



to have their own affairs brought to light, sent a secret slanderous report to the Sublime Porte against Stoiko Popovich and his son. The slanderous report was handed to the Sublime Porte by the Istanbul Patriarch. A second copy of the same report also reached the Porte through the mediation of the Kotel citizen, Prince Stephanaki Bogoridi, Rakovski's former patron, who was already embittered at the revolutionary trends in the activity of his fellow townsman. The Sublime Porte was alerted and it immediately took the necessary measures. The Vidin Pasha was transferred to another post 'because he had failed to disclose the plot in good time'. The Turnovo district was placed under the rule of the Roussé Pasha. Military units from Odrin (Edirné) were sent towards Sliven and Kazanluk to reinforce the respective garrisons. An order was issued for the arrest of Stoiko Popovich and his son, stating that father and son should be sent to Istanbul. The measures taken by the Ottoman authorities were not accidental: the events of 1821-1843 in Braila, the Niš uprising, Mamarchev's revolt in 1835, the uprisings in West Bulgaria were all still fresh in their memory.

The events that followed were described by Rakovski himself in a manuscript preserved to this day. Rakovski was arrested and sent to the Roussé prison. He spent 18 days there, and when he was brought out to be sent to Istanbul, he saw his father also in chains. Both father and son reached Istanbul on horseback in midwinter, where they were jailed in one of the most terrible dungeons. They had to wait for six months before they were brought to trial. After long in-

terrogations they were found not guilty. Nevertheless, they were not set free due to the interference, for a second time, of the Greek Phanariot clergy. Father and son were sentenced to seven years penal servitude. Long years of sufferings began for them. They did not become disheartened, however, although they were among robbers, harlots, bloodsuckers from the forests and parricides, as Rakovski wrote later. The innocent prisoners, helped by Kotel friends, made many representations to be set free. At last, after three years of imprisonment their request was granted. In the meantime, the whole of Stoiko Popovich's property had dwindled down to nothing. The new Grand Vizier Rashid Mustafa issued an order for the release first of the father, and a little later, of the son, in the beginning of 1847. For nearly three and a half years Rakovski had experienced the horrors of the Ottoman dungeons. He was ruined financially.

Rakovski's stay in prison, however, proved of benefit to the sharp-witted Bulgarian. There he came to know different people, customs, traditions; he gleaned a lot of experience which was of great help to him in his revolutionary activity. There were about 200 prisoners in the jail where Rakovski was serving his sentence, and the crimes of all prisoners were a constant topic of discussions. 'Day and night, their accusations and excuses were discussed, criticized,' wrote Rakovski.

Rakovski, who had had many dealings with leading Turkish administrative functionaries, had learned a lot about the lawyer's profession, so he set about working as a



lawyer. No special legal qualification was required in the Ottoman Empire at that time. What one needed was to be able to work as a lawyer. In a short time Rakovski earned quite a lot of money and decided to take up trade. He had friends among the notable Turks, one of whom was Mustafa Bei, who later on played an important role in his life. Rakovski, together with prominent Turks, began buying off the collecting of state taxes. During the following 2-3 years, he contemplated the building of flour-mills in common with the prominent Bulgarians, the Chalukov's from Plovdiv. He travelled a lot about the country, and became interested in the production of iron in Samokov. These trips round Bulgaria enabled him to study thoroughly the situation in his country, to see for himself how the people lived. Meanwhile, he had come to the realization that 'if you have no money in Istanbul, no one will pay you any attention, not a single grosh will they give you,' as Rakovski wrote. He established some very useful friendships with high-ranking Ottoman dignitaries, and his position got so consolidated that he could fight even against the omnipotent counsellor to the Sultan, Prince Stephanaki Bogoridi.

Rakovski did not possess any genuine commercial qualities. This can be convincingly understood from certain documents preserved up to now. Many of his enterprises failed due to his hastiness, to his not maturely considered decisions. His partner Atanas Chaliki advised him quite often to be more careful, more cautious.

Rakovski's father returned to Kotel about that time, but, disillusioned with his fellow townsmen, he withdrew

into himself and died shortly after that. Rakovski was now alone and once again other thoughts occupied his mind. Although he had accumulated a considerable sum of money, he had never sought his own, personal prosperity. He was worried about the fate of his nation. 'Growing richer,' he wrote in a letter dated 1858, 'was no joy for me, because I came to know the sufferings of our poor nation, because I saw the people sinking into ever greater depression from day to day.'

During all these years the efforts of the Bulgarian people to gain an independent church were intensified. Rakovski was among the front-rankers in the struggle for church independence. After numerous representations, on October 9, 1848, a firman was issued, according to which the Bulgarians were allowed to build a church of their own in Istanbul. Rakovski's joy had no end. It was for the first time that an Ottoman document contained the words 'bulgar milleti' (Bulgarian people) instead of 'roum-milleti' (Greek people).

During the years preceding the Crimean War, Rakovski made his first literary attempt, which naturally reflected the plight of his fellow countrymen. He wrote, among other things, the following about the age-old Ottoman bondage: 'When one thinks of the sufferings this poor nation has gone through, and how mercilessly its blood has been shed, one's hair stands on end at the torturers' malice and inhuman and merciless fury that oppresses this nation.' The success of the Bulgarian church struggle filled Rakovski's heart with joy, but he was fully aware of



the fact that this success was only one stage in the greater, harder and more important struggle of the people for political and social liberation. Personally, he had excellent opportunities for an affluent, happy life, for a rich career. He, however, preferred struggle and suffering to luxury and comfort, because, as he wrote, 'As long as I can stand on my feet and use my hands, as long as I feel even the slightest lucid mind in me, I will not cease to work for the welfare of my people whom, ever since my early youth, I have come to love ardently, and who are the most precious thing I possess in the world.'

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The Eastern Question became once again aggravated at the beginning of the '50s in the nineteenth century. Approaching events engendered the hope for a happier life of the Bulgarian people in the near future. The ideas of the revolution of 1848 crossed also the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. Sporadic revolts, which turned into widespread uprisings, broke out in Bulgaria. The exploitation of the peasants was intensified. The feudal lords seized not only free state lands, but also lands owned by Bulgarian peasants. This process was most widespread in Northwestern Bulgaria.

Russia's influence was keenly felt in the Near East. For decades on end, she had pursued a systematic policy aimed at the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, at the setting up of independent national states in the European territories of the Empire. These endeavours of the great Slav country

came up against the resistance of England, France and Austria, whose expansionist policy clashed with the Russian aspirations. Capitalism, however, continued penetrating at that time ever more widely into the Ottoman Empire; conditions for revolutionary reforms were being created. The bourgeoisie gradually consolidating its positions was the champion of these tendencies, the bearer of the new production relations.

Towards the end of 1852 and the beginning of 1853, the dispute over the so-called 'holy places', i. e. the international status of Jerusalem, flared up. The question of the protection of the Christians on the Balkan Peninsula was also raised. Russia sought a just solution of this problem stimulated by the same motives which prompted France to patronize the Catholics, and England the Protestants. The Sublime Porte, however, instigated by the Western Powers, refused to comply with the Russian demands. Thus the next military conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was beginning to emerge.

Rakovski did not remain a stranger to all these developments. He began making plans to prepare the Bulgarian population by building up a secret organization. So, the first Bulgarian nationwide revolutionary and political organization, called Secret Society, closely linked with Rakovski's activity, was created. He was the life and soul of this society, which set itself the task to make the people rise up in arms at the opportune moment. For Rakovski this would be the time when Russia declared again war on the Ottoman Empire, or as he put it: 'to prepare the people



to be always ready, so that they should be able to act when the opportune moment sets in'. Within a very short time the new organization managed to create a broad network in many towns in both North and South Bulgaria.

Meanwhile Prince Menshikov arrived in Istanbul as the Emperor's emissary. The negotiations led to no result. On June 14, 1853 the war was declared. The Russian troops invaded Wallachia and Moldova. On November 30, Admiral Nahimov routed the Turkish fleet near Sinope. Another Russian army was advancing in the Caucasus. England, France and a little later Sardinia sent troops to help Turkey. Military operations were gradually transferred to the Crimea.

Prince Menshikov's mission and the subsequent war were greeted by the Bulgarians with undisguised rejoicing. It was a common belief that Bulgaria's turn to be liberated had come. A Central Bulgarian Trusteeship was set up in Bucharest. It organized volunteer detachments, with great numbers of Bulgarians joining their ranks. Later they took part in the military operations and fought very bravely.

Rakovski, in the meantime, also intensified his activity. He took advantage of his knowledge of many foreign languages as well as of his ties with leading Turkish dignitaries, and managed to get a post as chief interpreter at the Headquarters of the Ottoman army in North Bulgaria so that he could more successfully conduct his clandestine task of organizing the revolutionary network. Having secured this high post, Rakovski worked feverishly for setting up separate organizations affiliated to the Secret Socie-

ty, in different Bulgarian towns. Their task was to prepare the people, to know what quantities of arms were available, to collect information about the disposition of the Turkish troops. The plan included the formation of separate armed detachments made up to Bulgarians, officially intended to be sent to fight against the Russians. With this end in view, they even applied for arms to the Sublime Porte through the Minister of War, Mehmed Ali Pasha. The plotters planned to have the Bulgarian detachments turn at some suitable moment their arms against the Turks, and to make the whole nation rise up in arms.

Having set up the first all-Bulgarian political centre, Rakovski declared that the general uprising should be launched depending on the advance of the Russian army. This was absolutely natural due to the then existing situation. He was far from the idea of waiting inactively for the progress of developments. On the contrary, he intended to act independently, arms in hand, and his actions as part of the strategic plan, to be coordinated with the actions of the advancing Russian army. The main region, according to Rakovski, had to be the central part of the Balkan Mountains. The Bulgarian detachments were to occupy at once the key mountain passes, which were well-suited for such actions. As a result, communications between the Turkish army, situated along the Danube, and its forces in the southern regions of Bulgaria would be severed. Rakovski sought unity of action along yet other lines, efforts were made to establish contacts with the Greek national-liberation movement in Epirus and Thessaly; a messenger



sent by Rakovski went to Belgrade where he had talks with the Serbian State Administration; efforts were also made to organize the Bulgarian emigrants north of the Danube, in Wallachia and Moldova.

The Secret Society was discovered, however, at the height of its activities. It is most probable that the Kotel chorbadjis together with the Preslav Greek bishop played the role of traitors. Rakovski was arrested and sent to Shoumen, to the Commander-in-Chief, Umer Pasha. The Turkish military chief was so infuriated that he wanted to have Rakovski immediately shot, but he dared not do it, because the chief military interpreter had been appointed with a firman and consequently should be tried in Istanbul. Rakovski was sent to Istanbul in chains. His former trade partner, Mustafa Bei, had been warned in advance, so when Rakovski reached Odrin (Edirné) he was released on the guarantee of Mustafa Bei. This influential Turk planned to make Rakovski his son-in-law; the latter had promised to become a Mohammedan. Rakovski made use of his relative freedom before the fixed day on which he was to become a Mohammedan for an entirely different purpose: he managed to organize a small detachment and, arms in hand, got out of the Ottoman capital and once again joined the struggle.

There are some interesting details about the departure of the detachment. When Rakovski's flight was discovered, town-criers went round the big city warning: 'Everyone who is hiding the dangerous criminal, or does not inform about him if he knows where he is, will be most cruelly

punished'. Rakovski meanwhile found shelter in an Armenian house, where no one suspected he might be hiding. A few days later, when the vigilance of the authorities had already slackened, Rakovski and his young comrades made for the Balkan Mountains on June 18, 1854. Rakovski has described the movements of the detachment day by day in his pocket notebook which has been preserved to this day. Towards the end of June they reached the Kotel Mountains. The further advancement of their detachment now became dangerous, because numerous Turkish troops had been sent against the oncoming Russian troops. Rakovski decided to wait until the Russian troops had moved southward and then join them, in order to avoid falling into the enemy's hands.

Unwelcome news, however, reached him soon: the Russians had crossed the Danube and had then retreated northward instead of going southward. Meanwhile autumn was approaching — a time inappropriate for operations in the mountains. Rakovski disbanded the detachment and went into hiding in the winter sheep-fold of a relative of his. Later he moved to his relative's house where he wrote his most significant literary work — the narrative poem *Gorski Putnik*. At the same time he studied the past of his nation, listened to the lasses' songs at their gatherings. It was at that time that Rakovski witnessed the final ruination of his father's home: upon the demand of the local chorbadjis, the household belongings of Stoiko Popovich were taken out, loaded on an ox cart and driven to the Konak (Town Hall) to be sold by auction. Rakovski's friends and relatives kept



his whereabouts in utmost secrecy. Rumours, however, that he was in Kotel began running round the town. Rakovski decided again to set out on a journey, because he was afraid that the authorities might again arrest him. So, at the end of December 1854, he left Kotel in disguise and, within a few days, reached Svishtov where he saw in the New Year. Friends then helped him cross the Danube a few days later, and soon he was in Wallachia. The country at that time was occupied by Austrian and Turkish troops. He spent a few days in Bucharest, but the danger of being caught made him leave the city and seek refuge in the estate of his cousin Nikola Balkanski in the village of Stanoya, where he remained until the storm abated. Here he began working on his narrative poem *Radan and Boyana* and continued writing *Gorski Putnik*. Meanwhile he was worried about the outcome of the war which 'the strong northern country' had started but against which had risen 'alliances of the great Western Powers'. All the time Rakovski was eagerly expecting Russia to liberate the nations enslaved by the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Bulgarian people. It was at this time that he took a very firm decision, which was of great importance to all his future career — to fight the Turkish government openly 'with the press and the sword', as he has put it in his work *Sudurzhanié na Zhitieto mi* (The Essence of My Life).

Thus ended the first period of Rakovski's life. While still a student he began worrying about the future of his nation. He was scarcely twenty when he took part in the

Braila events, after which he was forced to emigrate far away from his country.

The long years spent in the grim Turkish dungeons had made him fully aware of the corruption of the Ottoman Empire. He had travelled the breadth and length of Bulgaria and had witnessed the sufferings of his fellow countrymen. He had organized the first Bulgarian revolutionary political centre, he had tried to help the Russian army during the Crimean War; he had led a detachment in the Balkan Mountains — those had been all hard years, a source of invaluable experiences for the fighter for Bulgarian national revival. Rakovski had steeled himself during all these years, so that he was now able to embark on the road of a conscious revolutionary who had fully committed himself to serving his country. Up to that time he had been known mainly to his fellow countrymen. From then on he grew up in the struggle and in a short time became one of the first leaders of the Bulgarian people, a competent representative of his fellow countrymen abroad, an ideologist of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement, a functionary on a Balkan scale.

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In the summer of 1856 Rakovski went to Belgrade. The war had ended with a victory for the Western Powers, which supported the despotic regime of the Ottoman Empire. The Bulgarian patriot bemoaned the destiny of his nation and at the same time strove to find his place in the further struggle. Rakovski did not linger long in the Serbian



capital. The atmosphere in Belgrade did not suit his activity. Serbia at that time was ruled by Alexander Karageorgevich, a weak, irresolute prince. His rule was of a reactionary character; there was no freedom of the press and a police regime had been established all over the country. Both Austria and Turkey often interfered in the country's home affairs. Although he had influential friends among the Serbians, Rakovski did not stay long in Belgrade and continued his way to Novi-Sad.

Novi-Sad at that time was the cultural centre of the Serbian people. It was the carrier of democratic ideas amid the Serbian society. *Srbski Dnevnik* was published in Novi-Sad. It was one of the most popular and well edited papers which contained a great number of articles and facts about the enslaved Balkan nations. Its editor, Dr Danilo Medakovich, an educated Serb and brilliant journalist, who was greatly interested in history, sympathized with the Bulgarian cause. Therefore, it was quite natural that Rakovski sought to establish contact with him. The two prominent functionaries soon found a common language. Rakovski was soon enlisted by Medakovich in the editorial office of *Srbski Dnevnik*. Their partnership began in September 1858 and continued to the end of Rakovski's stay in Novi-Sad. During this time Rakovski published his book *Predvestnik na Gorski Putnik* (Precursor of Forest Traveller), which was followed by his immortal narrative poem *Gorski Putnik* (Forest Traveller).

Rakovski developed an inclination for writing at an early age. His first literary attempts dated from 1851.

Some time later he also worked over a manuscript treating of the sufferings of his country. He also wrote an autobiographical book *Nepovinen Bulgarin* (An Innocent Bulgarian) in which he described his sufferings in the Turkish dungeons. His masterpiece, however, is the narrative poem *Gorski Putnik*, the first work in Bulgarian literature in which the subject of the national-liberation movement of the Bulgarian people was widely reflected. It was published at the beginning of 1858 and produced a powerful impact on Rakovski's contemporaries. This poem, which many learned by heart, resolutely, boldly and vigorously roused the people to revolt, to revolution, to an armed struggle against the tyranny, national and social, exercised over the enslaved peoples. Rakovski's prose works reveal the same trends: in describing the unbearable sufferings of the Bulgarian people, Rakovski strove to justify as lawful every revolutionary activity against the ferocious oppressor; he wanted to inspire the Bulgarians with strength and confidence in their future, with resoluteness in their fight for freedom.

In Novi-Sad Rakovski, assisted by Dr Danilo Medakovich, succeeded in organizing the publication of a Bulgarian newspaper. The distinguished Serbian journalist, as a result of many insistent representations, managed to obtain permission to publish 'in translation' *Srbski Dnevnik* in Bulgarian, under the name of *Bulgarska Dnevnitsa*. After the experimental number of *Bulgarska Dnevnitsa*, Rakovski took over the publication of the newspaper on June 26, 1857. *Bulgarska Dnevnitsa* was a weekly paper. It published ar-



ticles and reports on issues in which the Bulgarian readers at that time were interested. Its manner of editing, its language and the problems discussed made the paper the first political emigrants' organ of the Bulgarian people. The articles and features in it were quite different both in subject-matter, boldness and spontaneity, from anything the Bulgarian readers had ever read. Rakovski contemplated the simultaneous publication of yet another literary organ. The first number was published under the name *Dunavski Lebed* (Danubian Swan).

Soon many reports about the struggles of the Bulgarians against the Greek Phanariot clergy and the lawless actions of the Ottoman rulers with regard to the Bulgarian people began reaching the editorial office of *Bulgarska Dnevnik*. This, naturally, attracted the attention of the Sublime Porte. The Turkish government took measures to stop the publication of a newspaper that went very much against the grain with it. At the request of the Turkish government, the Austrian authorities confiscated number 19 of the paper, stopped its publication, arrested Rakovski and sent him towards Zemun with the intention to deliver him to the Turkish pasha in Belgrade. After Rakovski's vigorous protests, the authorities decided to expel him from the country and send him to Wallachia. Thus Rakovski's work that had so successfully begun in Novi-Sad, was put an end to. A fresh start had again to be made. The stoppage of *Bulgarska Dnevnik* was a heavy blow to Rakovski, both moral and financial. He owed Medakovich a considerable sum of money for his help in the

publication of *Bulgarska Dnevnik* and the promised funds had not yet arrived.

During his stay in Novi-Sad, Rakovski established contact with a number of prominent Serbs living there at that time, who later played a considerable role in the political and cultural life of Serbia. Rakovski, for his part, who had experienced the influence of this cultural Serbian environment, impressed the Voivodine Serbs with his energy, love for his people, and his intellect.

While in Novi-Sad, Rakovski began to translate textbooks for the Bulgarian schools, to collect folklore works, to look for data connected with Bulgaria's history. His occupations, however, were not confined only to the field of literature. In the meantime rumours had reached him about a revolt contemplated by Bulgarian emigrants in Belgrade. He and Ivan Kulin undertook to dissuade the overenthusiastic Bulgarian fighters from rising up in arms, since neither the setting for such a revolt was favourable, nor was a liberation movement at that particular moment in the interest of the Bulgarians. The revolt had been instigated by certain interested Serbian opposition circles, who sought to solve their own problems by means of the revolt. At that time the Serbian minister of home affairs was Konstantin Nikolaevich, who was the son-in-law of Prince Alexander Karageorgevich and a friend of Rakovski from his stay in Istanbul. Rakovski, naturally, was very well informed about the developments in Serbia, and he was fully aware of the fact that such a liberation movement would bring only sufferings and calamities to the Bulgarian people living in the



Vidin frontier area. Therefore, he constantly warned his fellow countrymen living at that time in the Serbian capital, to keep quiet. In this way Rakovski succeeded in preventing an unnecessary revolt by the Bulgarians, which would have inevitably ended in useless bloodshed.

The feverish activity of the prominent Bulgarian revolutionary was interrupted by his expulsion from Novi-Sad. Rakovski was forced to leave Serbia and look for another place he could work. As soon as he crossed the frontier, he made for Galatz, where he had many friends among the numerous Bulgarian colony.

Having reached the big Danubian port town, Rakovski's plan was to set up a literary society as well as a Bulgarian printing house, which his people were deprived of. He was supported by the Galatz Bulgarians and issued an 'appeal for the setting up of a Bulgarian literary society', in which he pointed out the necessity of education if a Bulgarian national self-consciousness were to be developed. According to him, a man without education and knowledge was as good as dead. Rakovski repeated the same concept in 'An appeal for assistance to set up a Bulgarian political and literary newspaper in Europe', which was published in December 1857. About the middle of December, Rakovski left for Iasi, at that time the capital of Moldova, in order to obtain a permit for the opening of the Bulgarian printing house in Galatz. Moldova's ruler then was the Bulgarian Nikola Konaki-Bogoridi, an old acquaintance of Rakovski. He reminded Konaki-Bogoridi of the invaluable services to

the Bulgarian cause rendered by his great grandfather Sophronius of Vratsa, the greatest man of the Bulgarian National Revival, as well as of those of his father Stephanaki Bogoridi, and asked him to facilitate the development of Bulgarian education. At the same time he assisted the people who were endeavouring to obtain a permit for setting up a Bulgarian high school in Bolgrad, not dependent on the Ministry of Education in Iasi. The utilization of the lakes near Bolgrad, as well as the church income, were placed at the disposal of the school for its financial support. Rakovski returned to Galatz to report on the results of his efforts after Prince Konaki-Bogoridi assured him that his request for the opening of a Bulgarian printing house would be granted. It was just then, while he was working on a plan how to organize the newly opened high school in Bolgrad that Rakovski learned of a secret order for his detention. Rakovski had no idea where the new danger of arrest had come from. Later on it became known that those were new attempts of the Sublime Porte to lay hands on the rebel constituting such a menace to the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte, having learned from the report of Prince Nikola Konaki-Bogoridi of the request of the Bulgarians, handed in by Rakovski, to have a printing house set up in Bolgrad, ordered the Prince to catch immediately 'the dangerous rebel' and send him over to Istanbul. A flight became indispensable. This time Rakovski made for 'the blessed land of Russia', mother of the Slav people and protector of the Bulgarians, as Rakovski himself put it. The Bulgarian revolutionary, after a brief stay in the



frontier settlement of Kubei, settled in Odessa where he remained until the beginning of 1860.

A new stage in the life of Rakovski began in the big Russian port town. The Bulgarian colony there received him open-heartedly. He was appointed supervisor at the Herson ecclesiastical seminary, but due to his critical and restless nature, he was soon forced to give up his job. Rakovski managed to get a Russian passport in Odessa, and made representations for obtaining Russian citizenship as well.

Rakovski's stay in Russia was marked by a prolific activity. The Bulgarian patriot devoted himself to scholarly investigations. He wrote and published his voluminous work *Pokazalets*, which includes a great deal of folklore material. *Pokazalets* has preserved its value even to this day. It was at this time that Rakovski wrote his two historical works entitled *Several Conversations with Assen I and Assen II*, and *A Brief Discussion on the Vague and Deceitful Fundamentals on which the Old History of all European Nations Is Based*. These two works of Rakovski are of no particular scholarly value. For his time, however, they played a considerable role for the patriotic revival of Bulgarian youth.

Rakovski realized very well the significance of the periodical press for the struggle of the Bulgarian people, and once again began contemplating the publishing of a paper of his own. He applied to the Russian authorities for a permit to continue the publication of *Dunavski Lebed*, as well as of *Bulgarska Dnevnikitsa*, but his request remained unanswered for a long time. He was fully aware of the difficulties ac-

companying the publication of his periodicals, and that is why he tried to organize it elsewhere, as far as possible from Turkey. Rakovski prepared 'An appeal for help for the publication of a Bulgarian political and literary paper in Europe', in order to facilitate his plans. His intention was to have the paper published either in Belgium or in Paris, both in Bulgarian and in French. It was at this time that he wrote *Dervish Outrages or the Eastern Question*. He tried to give a true picture of the situation in Turkey in a literary form. He was obsessed by one and the same thought: to help the spread of education among the people as a means of fighting ignorance. With that end in view, due to his broad connections with Bulgarians from all parts of Bulgaria, he encouraged every aspiration for learning, he tried to arrange for young Bulgarians to study at Russian educational institutions; he facilitated the finding of Bulgarian teachers, he instructed and gave advice, he sought out documents, chronicles, old manuscripts, legends, songs, stories. It was then again that he followed with keen interest the publication of Herzen's newspaper *Kolokol* in London. He also kept in touch with progressive activists in the Russian Empire.

While he was in Odessa Rakovski never abandoned the main goal of his activity, i. e. his efforts to achieve political freedom for the Bulgarian people. In the summer of 1858 he worked out a detailed Appeal to the Patriotic Bulgarians for the Liberation of Bulgaria. His appeal in fact represented a carefully worked out plan for an uprising. The plan envisaged first of all the creation of one managing cen-



tre under the name of A Charitable Bulgarian Society. This centre had to assume the responsibility for collecting funds and to head the liberation movement. The second part of the plan pointed out where and how the participants in the struggle for liberation should act. Rakovski was of the opinion that the Bulgarians themselves had to think of their future and not to wait for their freedom to be granted them. 'With the sword did the Bulgarians lose their freedom, with the sword again they must gain it back,' Rakovski wrote in his plan and added that no rights can be obtained without taking up arms and shedding blood.

Rakovski's ebullient activity gained him ever greater popularity. The Bulgarians began to regard him as one of their best educated and keenest fellow countrymen. The wealthy Bulgarians, however, who were used to imposing their will and to having all public affairs conducted in their interest, could not stand his independent character. Rakovski failed to get financial support for the publication of a number of his works which were ready for printing. He had addressed the Bulgarian community in Odessa at that time to provide him with money in order to publish a number of research works. His request remained a cry in the wilderness.

At the same time the Russian tsarist censorship, with its pro-Phanariot tendencies in regard to the church question, was another obstacle and reason that prompted Rakovski to look for a more appropriate place for his work where he could publish his works and, if possible, his independent newspaper. In the beginning of 1860 he left Odessa, and

went to Braila where he signed a contract with Bulgarian Braila patriots: they undertook to assist the publication of his ready historical research works. Then Rakovski moved to Wallachia and from there, in the first days of March 1860, he went to Belgrade.

In the beginning of the '60s of the nineteenth century a new atmosphere reigned in Serbia. At the end of 1858 the People's Skupshtina had dethroned Prince Alexander Karageorgevich and Milosh Obrenovich had again come to power. Being energetic and resolute, he strove to expand the rights of the vassal Serbian principality against the interests of the suzerain. The Sublime Porte did not favour the new Serbian Prince and his independent policy. The relations between the two states gradually deteriorated. This became more acute after the death of Milosh, when his son Mihail Obrenovich ascended the throne on September 14, 1860.

Serbia strove to lead an active foreign policy trying to secure the assistance of the rest of the Slav and other nations on the Balkans. The Serbian government instigated upheavals in Herzegovina and Montenegro. After repeated Serbian approaches, France and Russia agreed to endorse the principle of non-interference which, if observed, would enable the Serbian government to act more purposefully for uniting the efforts of the Balkan Christian nations. Negotiations began with Greece, contacts were established with Romania, connections were maintained with the leaders of the revolutionary movements in several regions in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. Mean while, the



Serbian government launched military preparations as well: funds for the purchase of weapons were sought, attempts for the supply of guns and ammunition were made. The French officer Hipolite Mondaine was appointed Minister of War. He made efforts to place the armed forces on a more modern basis. The situation in Belgrade was such that it was quite natural for the Serbian government to welcome such an active functionary as Rakovski. The latter, due to his resolute conceptions and established authority as a politician, journalist, writer, scholar and outstanding revolutionary, represented a suitable partner in the campaign for achieving Balkan unity in a struggle against the common enemy.

Rakovski got several of his works published during the first four months of his stay in the Serbian capital. This kind of occupation, however, did not satisfy the vigorous energy of the Bulgarian revolutionary. His mind was constantly bent on seeing his country liberated by means of a revolution. Events were taking place in Bulgaria while Rakovski was in Belgrade, that marked the beginning of a new stage in the struggle of the Bulgarian people.

Foreign influences had penetrated throughout the Ottoman Empire after the Crimean War. The Western Powers took advantage of the situation and tried to establish strong economic positions. They managed gradually to occupy all the key posts in the state, their goods invaded the Turkish market and brought about a decline of the handicrafts. A gradual financial and economic crisis set in, money was devaluated, the cost of

living went up, insecurity was mounting. A revolutionary setting was being created.

At about the same time the struggle for church independence approached a new stage. On April 3, 1860 the leaders of the Bulgarian religious struggle in Istanbul publicly rejected the Oecumenical Patriarchate. The people throughout the country followed their example. The campaign for driving away the Greek Phanariot clergymen was intensified. Rakovski decided that the opportune moment had arrived for him to start the publication of a new Bulgarian newspaper, which was to become a forum for the people's interests and aspirations. He had access to the topmost Serbian ruling circles at that time. 'The Prince is well disposed towards me,' he wrote in April 1860 to a friend of his in Braila. In August Rakovski applied for a permit to publish a Bulgarian newspaper. His request was soon granted. On August 25 the Serbian Trusteeship of Education informed him that he could publish *Dunavski Lebed* in Belgrade. The permit was handed to him personally and several days later, on September 1, 1860 the first number of *Dunavski Lebed* came out.

Rakovski devoted himself wholeheartedly to the publication of *Dunavski Lebed*. The newspaper discussed and explained various political, economic and educational problems, published hundreds of dispatches from different parts of Bulgaria, as well as broad information on world events. Reports connected with the church question were given priority. Rakovski knew no respite in his effort to awaken the patriotism of his people; he continuously



pointed out the different religious and other dangers for the unity of the Bulgarians; he tried to convince the Great Powers in the righteousness of the Bulgarian cause; he tried to persuade even the Ottoman government that they would benefit if the just demands of the Bulgarians were gratified. We may rightly say that there was not a single major or minor problem connected with the life of the Bulgarian people that was not reported or elucidated in *Dunavski Lebed*. The paper also showed keen interest and genuine sympathy with regard to all the other nations who were fighting for their freedom and independence. Many reports were published about the Italian revolutionaries headed by Garibaldi, the Hungarian fighters, headed by General Klapka, etc. The paper expressed, however, particular sympathies for the other Balkan nations fighting for their freedom. It discussed their problems exhaustively, sought to discover their motive forces and their common interests against the oppressor. The language of the paper was strong, resolute, aggressive. The Bulgarians had not had such a paper until then. It was in great demand, its words were listened to, its advice followed. Scores of opinions expressed by the paper's contemporaries have been preserved. They were all enraptured by the newspaper and its editor.

At first the general tone of the newspaper was rather moderate. Rakovski tried to emphasize and point out the advantages which the different European Powers would have from the solution of the Bulgarian question. He tried to be convincing. In order to facilitate a larger circulation of

the paper, Rakovski began to have, after its 17th issue, parts of the material published in French. This was the first Bulgarian forum representing the national cause before foreign readers.

The bulk of the material published at that time concerned the church struggle. Hundreds of letters and dispatches reflected its vicissitudes which reached their climax on Easter in 1861: thousands of Bulgarians succeeded in foiling the attempts of the Turkish authorities to send into exile the Bulgarian clerical leaders Ilarion and Avxenti. Rakovski, by describing the feat of the two church leaders, raised the spirit of the whole Bulgarian nation and intensified its resoluteness to fight. He published letters sent from Istanbul, which described the struggle of the unarmed Bulgarians against the Turkish military units sent by the Sublime Porte to impose the will of the Patriarchate, in a special Flying Leaflet, dated April 29, 1861, which in fact was a real special edition of *Dunavski Lebed* 'Bulgarian people,' exclaimed Rakovski, 'let the example of our Istanbul Bulgarians be followed by all, and let each true Bulgarian stand as audaciously for our sacred people's cause as they. Our sacred faith, our very sacred and very dear nationality are suffering'.

Rakovski took an active part in the struggles of the Bulgarian people for church independence. While still a schoolboy he manifested his hostile attitude towards the Greek Phanariot clergy, towards those 'light extinguishers and scorners of the Bulgarian nation', as he called the Phanariots in 1839. In the Ottoman Empire the church oc-



cupied a prominent place in the life of the state: it was the Church that represented the respective nation before the authorities; it was the Church that looked after the education of the people, that collected sizable taxes, that influenced the economic life of all the people.

The Greek bishops, together with the Bulgarian chorbadjis, being loyal servants to the Ottoman state, were supporters of feudal relations, which was an obstacle to economic development. They were at the same time champions of a policy aimed at Hellenizing the Christian population. Their interests, because of the numerous privileges they possessed, ran counter to the people's interests, to the emerging Bulgarian bourgeois class. The heated dispute that was flaring up was religious in form, but in essence it was political, economic, national. The church struggle all over the Bulgarian lands was a manifestation of a national and political struggle for the recognition of the Bulgarian nationality. It was this aspect of the struggle that attracted Rakovski, and that had captured his attention and efforts.

Rakovski realized that without the solution of the Church question, the Bulgarian people could not improve their fate, could not confidently and with all their strength embark on the road of the struggle for political liberation. That is why the struggle of the ardent Bulgarian patriot against the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate was fierce. The Phanariot clergy, as Rakovski had repeatedly pointed out, nurtured an irreconcilable hatred towards the Bulgarians; they did not allow the Bulgarian language in the church services, they closed the Bulgarian schools, slandered the

Bulgarians before the Turkish government, imposed exorbitant fines upon them. The Greek clergy had a dual purpose: it strove, on the one hand, to amass riches at the expense of the Bulgarians and, on the other hand, which was still more oppressive and dangerous, it strove to assimilate and Hellenize them. This was the reason why Rakovski launched an uncompromising dispute with the Istanbul Patriarchate. The Greek 'megali idea' embraced by the free Greek state and pursued as official policy constituted a deadly danger for the Bulgarians. That is why Rakovski continuously denounced, fought, argued with those who supported the Phanariots and at the same time encouraged and inspired all fighters against foreign church oppression.

Rakovski's attitude towards the Greek clergy was characterized by certain peculiar features. It was refracted through the requirements of the struggle for the nation's upswing. The Istanbul Patriarchate had launched an open struggle, using all means to stifle the national feelings of the Bulgarians and imposing upon them the Greek language, prompted by one goal: to facilitate the Hellenization of the Bulgarian people. Therefore, for many years, Rakovski led a tenacious struggle to gain independence for the Bulgarian church. The church question for Rakovski was not just a demand for canonical rights, for a purely religious faith. It was a struggle for nationality. Thus the struggle for church independence cleared the road for the struggle for national liberation.

Side by side with his opposition to the Istanbul Patriarchate, Rakovski led an embittered struggle against the



various foreign religious propagandists who tried to split the nation by attracting some deluded followers to their religious ranks. Rakovski published scores of reports and letters which pointed to the efforts of the Bulgarians to resist those agents of foreign interests. This struggle too was not waged for any dogmas and canons, but for preserving the unity of the Bulgarian people. Rakovski, a non-believer himself, never failed to declare that the time of the superstitious and hidebound Middle Ages was gone beyond retrieve. It was not anathemas — the malicious fabrications of bigot monks, but sharp bayonets and long-range guns that mattered. Rakovski's struggle contributed to weakening the religious feelings of the Bulgarians at a time when religion still had considerable influence, especially under the conditions prevailing in the Ottoman Empire.

Another danger threatening the Bulgarian people in 1861 was duly reflected in *Dunavski Lebed* — the gradual migration of desperate Bulgarians northward, because of their hard plight. This migration had been gaining momentum in certain parts of the country and threatened to depopulate whole regions. Always on the alert, Rakovski launched a resolute fight against this migration. He published many dispatches, and addressed compassionate words to the poor Bulgarians who, because of inhuman sufferings and oppression by the Ottoman authorities, decided to leave their native towns and villages. It was the Russian land-owners who benefited from this migration, because thus they got industrious Bulgarian farm hands. In Bulgaria, however, they were supplanted by foreigners who made the

life of the local people even more unbearable. This depopulation of the native Bulgarian lands induced Rakovski to fight against it with might and main. To counteract it, Rakovski set out for Russia to explain on the spot to leading Russian functionaries how harmful this migration was. He succeeded, through his articles and reports in *Dunavski Lebed*, in convincing many Bulgarians not to undertake such risky steps, not to desert their country. 'My dear Bulgarian brothers,' he wrote in his paper, 'migration is death for you, murder for your children and devastation for your country. No one will praise you for such a mean action, the whole world will rebuke you and revile you as people unworthy of preserving your dear old homes, which your glorious ancestors have won valiantly, defended and left as a sacred heritage to you. If you are sick and tired of suffering, the time for it to end has now come if you are only reasonable.' These words had an effect. Soon migration came to an end and Rakovski could not but be glad. He gave prominence in his paper to news about Bulgarians who had changed their mind and decided not to emigrate.

Rakovski was constantly molested by the persecutions of the Sublime Porte. The Turkish government tried to suppress the publication of *Dunavski Lebed* shortly after it began coming out. Later it sent an ultimatum demanding the deportation of Rakovski as a political criminal. All these moves caused the outstanding Bulgarian revolutionary to apply for Serbian citizenship and seek the protection of the Government in whose country he lived. In the autumn of



1861 he handed in his application to the Trusteeship of Foreign Affairs. Towards the end of the year, after some necessary formalities, Rakovski was given a Serbian passport, and after that was treated as a Serbian citizen.

The increasing economic crisis, the insecurity and the mounting arbitrariness and lawlessness on the part of the Ottoman administration aggravated still more the plight of the people. The Bulgarians, deprived of rights, were subjected to ever greater oppression: robbery, pillage, attacks, murders, following one after the other. More and more reports were published in *Dunavski Lebed* about outrages committed against the Bulgarians. The tone of Rakovski's writings became ever harsher, Rakovski made a special historical review in one of his articles (A View of the East), published in August 1861, to prove that disorder and lawlessness had always reigned in the Ottoman Empire. According to him, millions of people had perished since Ottoman rule was established in the Balkans. This situation could no longer be tolerated; hence a logical conclusion: a joint uprising was inevitable. Since the Sublime Porte was powerless to cope with the chaos in the country, every citizen was entitled to defend himself if his life was endangered. So Rakovski concluded: 'When a nation has been driven that far, everybody will justify the uprising! Most of the peace-loving nations, once driven to such a state, will not heed any danger but will resort to extremes.'

A heavy economic crisis set in at that time. Rakovski published interesting reports in *Dunavski Lebed* about the

mounting confusion. His Istanbul contributor Dainelov described events in Istanbul so: 'The stock exchange was closed by means of bayonets. The money changers were driven out. The streets are full of people. All sorts of shouts are heard. People, almost fainting and downtrodden, are trudging along. The Government turns a deaf ear on everything. All bakeries have been closed, the people — Turks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews and Greeks — all run about with bloodshot eyes asking for bread, but I can't describe the exact present state because the mail is irregular; fightings with knives have taken place at the bakeries.'

Under these circumstances, it was self-evident that the only outcome of this situation was a revolution. Rakovski began rallying around him young Bulgarians who were ready to sacrifice themselves for their country's liberation. Young men flocked to Belgrade; Rakovski was looking for weapons, munitions, drugs and doctors, military maps, engineering instruments, etc. It was only too natural that *Dunavski Lebed* stopped coming out towards the end of the year — the pen gave way to the sword. Rakovski went back to arms.

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A new stage set in in Rakovski's activity. Once more the question of the armed struggle came to the fore. This new stage was directly connected with the course of developments in Serbia. Preparations were being made there for the rejection of Serbia's vassal dependence, for



driving away the Turkish garrisons from the fortresses in the country and, above all, from Belgrade. The presence of these foreign garrisons was a constant source of friction and incidents. Events were coming to a head around Montenegro, around Herzegovina. The setting was very suitable for the Bulgarians to rise up in arms. The Serbian government assisted the organizing of a Bulgarian military unit. Word went around about this military unit all over the country. The number of Bulgarian patriots who joined Rakovski in Belgrade was rapidly increasing. Many of the future leaders of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement were among them. Towards the end of 1861 Rakovski worked out a special plan for the liberation of Bulgaria. According to that plan, a well armed regiment was to set out for the Serbian border and continue eastward along the ridge of the Balkan Mountains, which run across the whole country. This regiment was to coordinate its actions with the developments in Serbia. Its ultimate goal would be to reach Turnovo where, according to the plan, the number of the insurgents should be approximately 150,000 people; 40,000 of whom were to be armed. The liberation movement was to spread as far as the areas along the sea, so that about half a million people were to rise up in arms. Under these circumstances Rakovski considered the successful outcome of his plan as certain.

All efforts of the ardent Bulgarian revolutionary were focused on the better preparation of the armed military unit which was to bear the brunt of the fighting. One of the participants in the Bulgarian Legion, Yordan Zhechev

Planinski, wrote in his notes held at that time about the training of the 'first Bulgarian independent regiment organized and supplied with all the necessary equipment, which also had a three-coloured silk flag: green, white and red, with a golden lion on the green field. The Bulgarian military unit studied military service, was drilled in shooting, marching and covering long distances. 'We had even mastered military discipline,' wrote Planinski further, and described the appearance of his commander thus: 'Rakovski was dressed in an old-Bulgarian uniform, and had a white fur cap on his head adorned with a golden-maned lion; his military coat was made of red broadcloth, his trousers of green broadcloth. He wore black patent leather boots with spurs, and his mantle, his top piece of clothing, had no sleeves and reached down to his heels. His look was heroic.' In the words of some other contemporaries, Rakovski was tall, had a strong erect body, walked with resolute, bold strides; he had thick black hair and moustache, his eyes were fiery and coal-black, his forehead was high, his eyebrows were black and almost always knitted, revealing an experienced haiduk who had suffered a lot. His speech was even, pleasant, attractive and convincing; his voice was clear, resonant and when necessary, thunderlike. He walked in Belgrade accompanied by two or three of his young warriors, something like an honorary escort. Rakovski maintained this appearance and air of showiness, not only to please his own vanity, but because he represented the Bulgarian people and considered it his duty to emphasize the dignity of the Bulgarians.



The Bulgarian volunteers who had gathered in Belgrade were burning with impatience to cross the border as soon as possible and step on native soil. Tension was mounting. The Sublime Porte amassed troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina, launched a broad offensive against Montenegro, reinforced the garrisons and fortresses situated in Serbian territory. The number of incidents in Belgrade was incessantly growing: the unclarified situation of the Turkish residents in Belgrade was a constant source of quarrels. Turkish soldiers killed a Serbian youth during a clash on June 3/15, 1862 near a Belgrade fountain. This incident soon flared up and gave rise to a fierce skirmish with the Turkish soldiers outside the fortress. The fighting continued throughout the night.

The breakout of the fighting found Rakovski at the height of his preparations for the forthcoming uprising in Bulgaria. He had just returned from the Romanian Danubian port of Gruia, where he had met with the former ruler of Moldova, Prince Nikola Konaki-Bogoridi, whom he wanted to persuade to take part in the forthcoming events in Bulgaria. In one of his letters Rakovski wrote that he had immediately armed part of his volunteers and together with them had gone to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I. Garashanin, and the Minister of Home Affairs, N. Hristich, and had offered them his services 'in this important and dangerous circumstance'. Almost all the Bulgarian volunteers took part in the fighting that ensued later. In the morning they went to their leader with the captured rifles and swords. One of the swords, which had a golden handle,

was belted on by Rakovski, who congratulated them on the victory and they shouted back: 'Hurray! Long live Bulgaria and her valiant soldiers!'

The skirmish on that day was only the beginning of the conflict. Much heavier fighting took place two days later when on June 5/17 early in the morning, without any real reason, the Turkish fortress artillery began shelling Belgrade. The shelling lasted four hours and a half, inflicting heavy casualties among the population. Rakovski and his military unit who had taken up convenient positions near one of the fortress's barricades, took active part in the fresh outburst of the fighting. With drawn sword, Rakovski encouraged his warrior fighting in the front line. Some time later, when a lull in the fire set in, Rakovski delivered a short speech. He told his warriors that the long expected moment for the liberation of the homeland had come. Arms in hand, they would soon own the boundaries of Bulgaria. Until then, however, it was necessary that they should help 'our Sister Serbia who has been caught up in a big fire.' The Bulgarian legion participated later in the siege of the Belgrade fortress which was in Turkish hands. They captured a sector around the fortress. At the same time the Bulgarian warriors were undergoing strenuous military training, in anticipation of further developments.

Rakovski availed himself of a temporary lull in the hostilities to continue his preparations for the future uprising. He set up in Belgrade a Provisional Bulgarian Administration — an organizational centre of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement whose task was 'to direct such



actions which concerned the nationwide Bulgarian uprising'. Drafts of the 'Statute' regulating the actions of the Provisional Bulgarian Administration Committee in Belgrade have been preserved to this day. The 'Statute' is signed by Rakovski as 'Chairman of the Administration', as well as by five other outstanding Bulgarians as members. It was about this time that Rakovski sent a small detachment towards Turnovo, headed by Hadji Stavri, to probe the atmosphere for an uprising inside Bulgaria. Rakovski was in constant touch with friends living near the Serbian border. They informed him about the morale of the population beyond the border, about the detachments gathered nearby who were looking forward to launching an offensive, about the Turkish posses crossing the country and their outrages. Rakovski himself was eagerly waiting for the time when he would cross the border and enter Bulgaria. He worked out a special lithographed appeal to the Bulgarians, announcing that at last the time had come to crush the oppressive yoke. After noting that the whole Balkan Peninsula was on the move, he added: 'Can there be a more opportune moment for us than this? Let no one think that liberty can be gained without bloodshed and precious sacrifices. Let no one wait for someone else to liberate him. Our freedom depends on us!' With the words 'Freedom or death', Rakovski ended his appeal to his fellow countrymen. Rakovski summoned his fellow countrymen to go to the battle fields under the homeland's banner.

Meanwhile the summer rolled by without marking the beginning of the long and eagerly expected uprising in

Bulgaria's territory. The Bulgarians began to feel uneasy. The prominent Bulgarian functionary Dr G. Vulkovich wrote to Rakovski from Paris: 'It is rumoured in Istanbul and elsewhere that the Serbian Government was not going to help us to get rid of our tyrants, that it only intended to use us as a scarecrow in order to obtain from the Turks what it wanted, that we should only be used as a cat's paw.' The course of developments, indeed, was not favourable to the Bulgarian intentions. After their intervention in the conflict between Serbia and Turkey, the European Powers summoned their ambassadors in Kanlidji, a settlement near Istanbul, where they discussed the question of a peaceful settlement of the dispute. On August 27, 1862, they signed a special protocol for settling the conflict. At the request of the British ambassador, one article of the protocol provided for the immediate disbandment of all military units made up of volunteers, the Bulgarian legion of Rakovski included. The protocol, having been signed by all the Great Powers, was handed over to the Serbian Government for implementation. In accordance with the protocol's provisions, on September 7th, the Bulgarian legion was ordered to be disbanded, the soldiers to be dismissed, and the arms, which were Rakovski's property, to be returned to him.

Thus the plans for an uprising in Bulgaria came to nothing. The efforts and means of the Bulgarians had been used for a cause of which they could not benefit. Being a good politician-realist, however, Rakovski accepted this fact, he had no other choice. The prominent Bulgarian



revolutionary Panayot Hitov wrote about these developments in his memoirs. Hitov headed a large detachment in the Bulgarian mountains, waiting for Rakovski to send him a signal for the uprising. Rakovski, instead, sent him a message telling him to abstain from rousing the people, because the Serbs had come to terms with the Turks. The old rebel captain wrote how shocked he had been at the news: he and his fighters for national liberation had been waiting in the Balkan Mountains for the general uprising to be declared; their patience was coming to an end, and, instead of rising in arms, they were told to put their arms away and wait...

Despite the failure, Rakovski gave a high assessment of the participation of the Bulgarian volunteers in the battle for the Belgrade fortress. Rakovski regarded the participation of the Bulgarian volunteers as 'the first step to independent political life'. According to him, the Belgrade developments demonstrated to Europe that 'the Bulgarians were not only meek ploughmen and quiet, humble craftsmen and tradesmen, as they had been thought to be, and that they had lost their old militant spirit, but that although they possessed these virtues, they were also valiant and dauntless fighters.' All the positive qualities emphasized by Rakovski fail to point out the whole significance of the Bulgarian Legion. Many of the participants in the battles acquired serious military toughness, which was of great help to them later in the revolutionary struggle against the oppressors.

After his legion was disbanded, Rakovski withdrew to the Serbian town of Negotin near the Bulgarian border.

Shortly afterwards, however, he was summoned to Belgrade to be assigned a new task: to help transfer across Romania Russian arms intended for the Serbian army. Rakovski upheld the idea that the military power of the Balkan nations should be strengthened for their future struggle against the common oppressor, and that is why he readily gave his services. He undertook to have the arms transferred from Krajova across Romania as far as the Serbian border on the Danube. A series of documents have been preserved showing his careful efforts to see to it that the arms reached their destination safely. Rakovski at that time also organized a special reconnaissance patrol in the direction of Vidin which town the Turks used as a fortress because he feared that danger might come from there.

New developments took place in the beginning of 1863. An uprising broke out in Poland, the spirits in Italy and Hungary began flaring up once more. England intensified her efforts to impose her will on Greece, promising to give her the Ionian Islands. Serbia made fresh attempts to reach agreement with the Balkan Christian peoples for a common struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The Serbian government, apart from its soundings in Bucharest and Tzetina, decided to send an emissary also to Athens, to study the chances for the creation of a Balkan Alliance. This trend in the Serbian policy coincided with Rakovski's own views, who believed that freedom could be gained only through the unified and joint actions of the Bulgarians and the rest of the Balkan nations. It was necessary that they should unite, form an alliance — coordinate their efforts in



order to liberate their fellow countrymen still under Ottoman bondage; it was in this way that the Bulgarians could attain their freedom. Thus, when the Serbian government offered to send Rakovski to the Greek capital, he readily accepted this diplomatic mission.

This choice was not accidental. The great Bulgarian functionary was well known to the Serbian government. As editor of *Dunavski Lebed* he enjoyed wide popularity not only among the Bulgarians, but also among the foreign diplomatic circles, where his activity was also well known and he was held in high esteem. His participation in the fighting near the Belgrade fortress while heading the Bulgarian legion, his assistance later in transferring Russian arms across Romania to Serbia had made his name quite popular. He had an excellent command of the Greek language due to his solid for the time classical education. His fame as poet, writer, scholar and fanatic democrat, the soul of the national-liberation movement in Bulgaria, and champion of the idea of a common struggle on the Balkans — all these things made the Serbian government choose the popular Bulgarian functionary as its emissary to Greece.

During the first half of March in 1863 Rakovski set off for the Greek capital under the name of S. Papadopoulos. He passed through Trieste, then stopped at Cetinje, where he got in touch with Prince Nikola and the ruling circles in Montenegro, and after that continued southward.

In the Greek capital Rakovski quickly established contact with the élite of the Greek society. Due to his previous acquaintance with Anastassios Manakis, a prominent Greek

social figure, Rakovski was introduced by this ardent friend of the Balkan Slavs into all political circles. He met with the Regent Vularis, the statesmen Kumunduros, the military chiefs Koroneos and Leotsakas, the veteran hero of the liberation war Kanaris, the son of Anastas Bulgarin from Malashevsko — Leonidas Vularis, etc. He also established many contacts with the foreign diplomats in Athens. On record are some invitations to receptions in the Russian Legation sent by the then minister plenipotentiary Bludov; Rakovski also maintained contact with the legation secretary Prince Gagarin, with the English women-travellers Mackenzie and Erby, with the Italian revolutionary Marco Antonio Canini, etc.

The atmosphere in the Greek capital at that time was far from favourable for negotiations. The first king of Greece, Otton, having been dethroned after the people's revolution, had been expelled from the country, which was then in a state of interregnum. The political parties, at enmity with one another, plunged into a struggle for power. Rakovski used his own code to inform the Serbian government about the situation in Greece where disorder and murders had become ever more frequent. 'Total anarchy reigns here,' he wrote in one of his reports. His stay in the Greek capital was pointless. Anti-Slav feelings skilfully stimulated by England, were taking the upper hand. Ever wider circles became gripped by intensified nationalism. According to the supporters of this mood, England was expected to render assistance in the building up of a Greater Greece whose boundaries would stretch as far as the deep



North of the Balkans. It was in Athens that Rakovski learned about some earlier negotiations between the Greeks and the Serbians, held a year and a half before, at the expense of the Bulgarians. The agreement reached between the Serbians and the Greeks opened the road for further territorial acquisitions at the expense of Bulgarian lands.

During his stay in Greece Rakovski established one more contact of an entirely different nature. He met the family of Hadji Hristo, the renowned Bulgarian military chief during the struggle for the liberation of Greece. He frequented their home where he was warmly received. It soon became clear that the reason for his frequent visits there was not only the memory of Hadji Hristo, but also his daughter Euphrosine (Phrosa). The affection was reciprocal and soon the engagement was announced. Rakovski's plan was to return again to Athens, and then to settle this personal question. Until then he decided to take with him Hadji Hristo's younger son, Georgi, in order to educate him at a proper school. On his way to Serbia he passed through Cetinje where he left Georgi in the Prince's court in the care of the Prince and the notable Montenegro educational functionary Archimandrite Nikiphor Ducic. Rakovski's plans for the settlement of his personal life were never realized. The homeland was for him the most important thing. His patriotic duty summoned him to another direction and did not let him set up a family of his own.

Rakovski departed for Belgrade, and left as his deputy in Athens the young Bulgarian Marko Balabanov who was studying in the Greek capital at that time. Disappointed in

the chances of reaching some kind of alliance with the Greeks, Rakovski realized how ephemeral were also the chances for an agreement with the Serbs. It was about this time that he wrote his notes on Serbian foreign policy. He viewed the trends in the policy of Prince Mihail Obrenovic and Prime Minister Garasanin critically and assessed them as unfavourable for the advancement of the Southern Slavs. Rakovski hesitated for a long time, wondering whether he should set about writing his work entitled 'Political Relations of the Serbian Principality with Bulgaria Today'. He considered this work as a 'friendly warning', because dissension and disagreement had driven both Bulgarians and Serbs into a grim situation. Rakovski pointed out that each nation should pursue such a policy that benefited, above all, its own interests. Each nation should, however, keep in mind the existing situation. He remarked further that the Bulgarians could accept an alliance with the Serbs, but only after each of the two nations' rights were clearly defined. The Bulgarians, he wrote, were not willing to shed their blood as they had done in the past for the interests of Serbia and Greece, just because those two countries were fighting against the common oppressor; they were not willing to sacrifice their lives for 'the cross and the faith' with no favourable results for the Bulgarian nation.

Rakovski prepared his manuscript on Serbian policy in three successive versions, but liked none of them. The delicate problem was how to say what he thought without being misunderstood.

His conviction that Serbia officially pursued a policy



defending her own interests was deep set in his heart. Rakovski also shared his opinion with the Montenegro Prince Nikola, with the English ladies Mackenzie and Erby, and some time later with the distinguished Englishman Humphrey Sandwith and others. Thus it was absolutely logical that Rakovski should leave Serbia and settle down in Romania.

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Rakovski arrived in Bucharest in 1863. He continued looking for allies in the struggle of the Bulgarian nation. This time his efforts were directed towards securing unity of action with Romania. The indefatigable Bulgarian revolutionary spent the last four years of his life in Romania, contributing enormously to the further development of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement.

Romania at that time was going through a period full of events and struggles connected with the setting up of a unified nation and with the achievement of complete independence. An acute political clash flared up in the country between the reactionary forces and Prince Kuza, who advocated the strengthening of the Romanian state by the introduction of a series of reforms in the interest of the people. Rakovski did not remain a stranger to this struggle. Right from the beginning he manifested a keen interest in both the home and foreign policy of Romania. He was also interested in the situation of the Bulgarian emigrants, whose number at that time was particularly great north of the

Danube. Thanks to his numerous visits to Bucharest Rakovski knew many Romanian statesmen. His views coincided in many points with the aspirations of the ruling Romanian circles. Just then the Romanian government was headed by the statesman Mihail Kogulniceanu. From the very beginning of his rule, he initiated resolute measures for the expropriation of all the monasterial property of the Greek clergy in Romania. The monasteries occupied a considerable area of the Romanian territory and so they contributed to strengthening the economic power of the Istanbul Phanariot Patriarchate against which Rakovski himself had fought for many years. The Bulgarian revolutionary proved in his works the disastrous role of the Greek Phanariot clergy concerning both the fate of the nations enslaved by the Ottoman Empire and the question of the peoples' national self-determination. These common interests against one and the same oppressor made Rakovski contemplate the publication of a new periodical in order to assist the liberation struggle of the Bulgarians.

The new government of Kogulniceanu initiated a series of democratic reforms among which the expropriation of monasterial property was one of the first. Quite a great number of Bulgarians lived in Romania at that time. Having run away from the oppression of the Ottoman authorities, most of the emigrants naturally tended to side with the progressive leanings of the government. Thus they stood out as another support of Prince Kuza in his struggle for overcoming the resistance of the reactionary and right-wing liberal circles. Georgi Rakovski, who enjoyed great



popularity not only among the Bulgarians, was the spokesman of these leanings. Rakovski, pinning his fresh hopes on Bulgaro-Romanian friendship, approached the Romanian government with the request to be granted permission for the publication of a new Bulgaro-Romanian newspaper. After he obtained the necessary permission, he set about organizing the publication of the paper. The programme of Rakovski's new periodical, called *Budushtnost* (Futurity) was very interesting: the paper was to fight for fraternal relations between the Bulgarian and Romanian peoples. The great Bulgarian revolutionary raised the slogan: 'Bulgarians and Romanians, from all parts! The key to the East is in our hands!'

Rakovski's initiative found support among the Romanian leading circles. Quite a number of Bulgarian emigrants also supported Rakovski's initiative. Opposition was voiced, however, by the wealthy Bulgarians organized in their own committee called *Dobrodetelna Drouzhina*. These Bulgarians were the spokesmen of class interests which differed in essence from Rakovski's views. They did everything possible to foil the publication of *Budushtnost*. If they were to help finance the publication of the paper, they would agree to do it on a number of conditions: that Rakovski should not be the editor, that the paper's name should be changed, because otherwise it might annoy the Ottoman authorities, that there should be no reports attacking Turkey, because in this case trade with countries beyond the Danube would be endangered, etc. The different reception of the idea for a new Bulgaro-Romanian

newspaper among the Bulgarians in Romania corresponded to the differences which divided at that time the Romanian society. Rakovski ardently supported the intentions of Prince Kuza and Kogulniceanu of carrying out decisive reforms directed against the big landowners. The wealthy Bulgarians maintained close links with the rich Romanian classes, so they could not but oppose the publication of Rakovski's paper. Nevertheless, the initiative was realized: the first number of Budushtnost appeared on March 8, 1864. It was warmly greeted by most of the Romanian papers.

At first in Budushtnost Rakovski tried not to express openly his attitude towards Romanian internal affairs. The introduction into the Romanian Parliament of the bill for agrarian reforms caused stormy debates and sharp political struggles throughout the country. The bill could not be passed because the reactionary parties were in the majority. Prince Kuza dismissed the National Assembly and fixed a date for a people's plebiscite. The results were a victory for the democratic circles. Rakovski and his newspaper Budushtnost also contributed to the successful outcome of this struggle.

The eminent Bulgarian politician abandoned the neutral policy of the paper and began publishing articles openly siding with the democratic forces. He supported vigorously the project for agrarian reforms. This problem, according to him, concerned not only the Romanians but also their friendly neighbours, the Bulgarian people. Rakovski, a convinced revolutionary, passionately advocated the right of the Romanian peasants to possess the land they cultivated.



There could be no progress in a country where the people were deprived of rights, Rakovski maintained. Where the peasants were subjected to ruthless exploitation, there could be no favourable conditions for cultural development. Rakovski wrote some other articles, too, which reflected his democratic views. Nations, according to him, could advance only when they lived freely, without personal privileges, because 'privilege and freedom, equality in rights and privilege are absolutely opposite to one another'. Rakovski counselled the Bulgarians not to follow the advice of the wealthy, but to vote for Kuza, for the reforms.

Rakovski incurred the discontent of the rich Bulgarians in Bucharest because he had taken side in the political struggle. They withdrew their financial support and in that way foiled the further publication of the newspaper which endorsed measures against the big landowners. Rakovski was simply forced to stop the publication of *Budushtnost*, because he was deprived of the necessary means. In the last number's editorial, under the heading *Message of the Editor*, he mentioned among other things, the reasons for the stoppage of the paper: the attitude of his rich fellow countrymen. 'They are men whose minds are obsessed by an oligarchical spirit, who demand every people's action to take place according to their own will, their own conviction! They despise the population... All they have done so far under the name of people's cause, has not been really such; they have done it because of their personal interests and, above all, out of murderous selfishness,' Rakovski wrote indignantly.

Rakovski decided, after the suspension of Budushtnost, to begin publishing a new Bulgarian-Romanian newspaper, Branitel (Defender). His first task was to secure the financing of the paper. His intention, however, remained unrealized — only one number of Branitel was published. The reason could again be sought in the same people who had foiled the publication of Budushtnost.

Rakovski, who attached high value to the role of a newspaper for the enlightenment and revolutionary education of the people, continued his efforts to secure the necessary means for the publication of a paper of his own. He realized that without a solid material background, he could not succeed, so he tried to find a printinghouse. He appealed to the Bolgrad citizens to place the Bulgarian printing house in the town and the necessary money at his disposal. His appeal met with no response. Rakovski could not realize the publication of his paper to the end of his life, although he knew how important the role of the press was.

Journalism, according to Rakovski, was of particular importance for the political maturing of a nation. The great Bulgarian patriot devoted himself to journalism as early as 1855, and within a short period of time emerged as the most outstanding Bulgarian publicist of the middle of the nineteenth century. Within ten years he had published four newspapers, one literary newspaper and one magazine. This activity of Rakovski was a great achievement under the circumstances. The broad and true picture of life at the time reflected in each issue, makes his papers even today a reliable source of information for the historian. They were a



veritable revelation for the Bulgarian readers and were also much sought abroad. Dunavski Lebed, for example, was read by the Russian minister of foreign affairs Gorchakov, by Prince Napoleon — a cousin of Napoleon III, by the Vienna government, etc.; articles were translated and published in French, German, English, Belgian and other papers. Rakovski's activity as publicist marked a whole stage in the history of Bulgarian political journalism. Rakovski is also regarded as the founder of Bulgarian national propaganda abroad.

The great Bulgarian patriot knew no respite in making known to the world the joyless fate of the Bulgarian people. He tried, at his meetings with foreigners, to draw their attention to the situation in Bulgaria. In this way he gained the sympathy of a number of influential personalities for the Bulgarian cause. For example, in 1864, he met with Sir Humphrey Sandwith, who was in Bucharest at that time. Sent by The Times and The Spectator and supplied with a letter of recommendation by the prominent Serbian statesman Philip Hristic, Sandwith found Rakovski, who succeeded in making the Englishman a convinced friend of the enslaved Bulgarian nation. Some time later, this outstanding Englishman, who was an authority on Balkan problems, wrote several books and articles in which he gave precise and objective data on the situation in Bulgaria.

Although he was deprived of a paper of his own Rakovski did not remain idle. He took up some other initiatives. During the winters of 1864-1865 and 1865-1866 he organized special lectures on Bulgarian history for

the young Bulgarians studying at the Medical School in Bucharest. These lectures were also attended by other Bulgarian emigrants in Romania, both young and old. One of the most zealous among the audience, for example, was the prominent Bulgarian revolutionary Hadji Dimiter, who at the head of a detachment of valiant fighters for freedom perished heroically only three years later in a battle against the Ottoman troops. Rakovski taught his listeners to love their nation. He pointed out its glorious past and stressed the necessity of launching a decisive fight to gain its freedom.

History was Rakovski's favourite field of study. The great Bulgarian revolutionary realized that a nation which knew its past, had greater confidence in its own strength. Rakovski prepared dozens of books and articles in which he elucidated many problems concerning the political and cultural past of the Bulgarian nation. He was well aware of the tendency of each nation to idealize its past. That is why he was of the opinion that not the history of a separate nation was useful, but general history of mankind. It was that history which enabled people to have a precise understanding of the past and on the basis of the comparative method, to be able to form a correct view of the future. It was the duty of scholars to set history on the right fundamentals – something which, according to Rakovski, did not happen often. The history of the nations, in his opinion, was characterized by constant changes. In the course of time all world events are subjected to changes. By studying these changes history helps us to overcome ignorance and to get



headed toward progress. A nation which cannot get to know itself can never perform anything great. Each nation, by exploring its historical past, becomes aware of the reasons for its ups and downs in the past and can see its future more clearly.

Rakovski's activity in the field of history was closely connected with some other pursuits such as collecting and studying old Bulgarian coins, as well as research work in the field of ethnography and folklore. Folk songs were given top priority in his research work. For many years he himself collected folk songs or asked friends to do it for him. He tried to discover in them memories of past historical events important to the life of the Bulgarian people.

Rakovski also worked in the field of linguistics, trying to find support of his historical views. His achievements in this field do not possess any particular scholarly value, but in his time they played a great role in creating a stronger patriotic atmosphere among the Bulgarians.

He put in tremendous efforts in connection with the opening of Bulgarian schools in different towns in Romania and the finding of well trained teachers, and readily helped new Bulgarian students to be admitted to study abroad, settling a series of problems of his countrymen connected with their studies, and always keeping an eye on them while they were studying.

This kind of assistance to the young Bulgarians did not satisfy Rakovski completely, so he also tackled questions of principle in public education. He has, undoubtedly, made a great contribution along this line. According to him, schools

were one of the basic prerequisites for the creation and strengthening of nationality. It is through education that a nation can also develop its political consciousness and get rid of the spirit of resignation. Rakovski believed that ignorance was an obstacle to progress, that it was one of the essential reasons for a nation to be kept in subjugation and obedience. He also devoted his attention to the development of knowledge, in general. He fought for the creation of a Bulgarian literary society because 'a man without knowledge and education is like a dead man,' Rakovski wrote in 1857.

Rakovski, however, was of the opinion that education was not necessary only for some select people, for just a few ones. He strove for mass education which would open the eyes of the broad masses, would enable them to realize their position, to understand what they really needed, and would make of them eventual fighters for freedom. With his activity in this field Rakovski became the founder of the revolutionary-democratic ideas in Bulgarian education and culture.

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Rakovski's many-sided efforts to develop the revolutionary spirit of the Bulgarian people kept him quite busy. He was still in Bucharest when, in the beginning of 1866, the fierce internal struggles in Romania ended with a coup d'état and the expulsion of the ruler Prince Kuza. Being



a convinced revolutionary-democrat, having supported ardently the policy of reforms, Rakovski had foreseen the imminent danger of the coup. According to the well-known Bulgarian rebel captain Panayot Hitov, a close friend of Rakovski at that time, the latter had even warned the Romanian ruler of the existing danger. Being a journalist, a public figure, Rakovski had also maintained contacts with the outstanding Romanian liberal K. A. Roseti, one of the authors of the coup d'état.

A new government came to power in Romania. Rakovski was approached with the request to recruit volunteers who would resist an invasion by Turkish military units across the Danube. The outstanding Bulgarian patriot had personal reasons to apprehend such an invasion. The new regime that was established north of the Danube met the disapproval of the Sublime Porte. This could very easily lead to a Turkish occupation of vassal Romania. Having been sought for many years by the Turkish government as an outstanding rebel, dangerous to the security of the Empire, Rakovski might have found himself in a very precarious position. To avoid this, Rakovski organized his personal reconnaissance in the Romanian town of Giurgui, which lies just opposite Rousse and was a big administrative centre and important fortress. Friends of his kept him regularly informed about the movements of the Turkish military units both along the Danube and inside the country. There are data which testify to the fact that he had also discussed with representatives of the Romanian government the possibilities of joint Bulgarian and Romanian actions

against a possible Turkish invasion. He had even offered a plan of his own, about which the Romanian Minister of War, Lekka, spoke later.

The coup d'état in Romania was the work of the so-called 'Monstrous Coalition' — an accord between conservative big landowners, and the right-wing of the liberals, representatives of the big Romanian bourgeoisie. These were the same circles against which Rakovski had fought so passionately through the pages of the *Budushtnost*. The imminent danger of a Turkish invasion in the first few days after the coup passed away. The ruling circles in Romania who knew Rakovski very well, wished no longer to cooperate with such an ideological opponent. At that time they were trying to reach some kind of agreement with the Sublime Porte, a move which could protect them against the Turks. A special Romanian delegation was sent to Istanbul in the middle of March 1866. The new regime in Romania was interested in maintaining relations of understanding with Turkey because, here and there in Romania, peasants and frontier guards openly declared that they did not recognize the dethronement of Prince Kuza. Under these circumstances the new rulers were in a hurry to take the necessary measures for their self-protection. The police were instructed to watch vigilantly both Romanians and foreigners known for their sympathies with the ousted regime. Rakovski figured among those, known as friends of Kogulniceanu and supporters of Kuza, as one who had actively worked against the interests of the reactionary circles in the country.



Under these circumstances Rakovski's anxiety was fully justified. He could not but apprehend an eventual accord between the new Romanian rulers in Bucharest and the Sublime Porte. Rakovski, who was persecuted by the Romanian police for political reasons, who had been repeatedly sought by the Turkish government, could be arrested and handed over to Turkey. In this way the Romanian government would demonstrate to the Turks its good will at a moment when it was interested in normalizing its relations with the Sublime Porte. It would simultaneously also get rid of a political opponent, who might give it a lot of trouble. With this in mind, Rakovski decided to disappear from the eyes of the police. He and the Bulgarian rebel captain Panayot Hitov left for Braila. Rakovski approached indirectly the Romanian minister of home affairs, protesting against the persecutions of the Romanian police. 'Tell our mutual friend, Mr Rosseti, minister of .....

Rakovski cabled to a Romanian lawyer, a close friend of his, 'that the local police are openly after me, on whose order and why, I don't know. You know very well that I've come here on my own business, and that I avoid being mixed up in anything that concerns politics.' Rakovski reached Galatz where he was advised by the Russian consul to move on to Russia. About April 6th, Rakovski was already on Russian soil and stopped at Kubei. There he fell ill. His illness, as if a serious warning for future troubles, confined him to bed for three weeks. After he recovered, he went to Kiprianovski Monastery, from where he went on to Odessa by way of Kishinev.

Meanwhile important developments were taking place in Romania, which concerned both Rakovski and the fate of the Bulgarian emigrants in the country. At the end of May Turkey began to amass troops opposite the Romanian bank of the Danube, the relations between the two countries became tense, and the danger of a Turkish invasion became a reality. The Romanian government was forced to take measures for its self-defence. It also organized volunteer detachments and appealed for cooperation to the foreigners living in Romania. Naturally, it sought the cooperation of the Bulgarians, too. The minister of war, Lekka, sent for Rakovski, asking him 'to do what he had offered to do after February 11th.' i. e. after the coup d'état.

The Bulgarian emigrants in Romania were at that time divided into three groups; 1) the elderly emigrants, grouped in the organization of the rich Russophiles, called Dobrodetelna Drouzhina, 2) the revolutionary wing headed by Rakovski, and 3) the liberal bourgeoisie with a pro-western orientation, to which the Romanian government appealed for cooperation. The Romanian political leaders got in touch with Ivan Kasabov, a representative of the liberally-minded Bulgarian bourgeois circles, who had built up their own organization called Secret Central Bulgarian Committee, charged with the task of acting in the forthcoming events. An Act of a Holy Coalition between the Bulgarians and the Romanians was concluded, according to which the Bulgarian Committee could act only in accord with the Romanians. This, in fact, made the Bulgarian Committee subordinated to the Romanians, which meant



that it had no right to make decisions of its own. These events had remained unknown to Rakovski.

Rakovski was convinced in the necessity of an uprising in Bulgaria, so he went round visiting his friends in South Russia. He also visited the benefactor Nikolai Mironovich Toshkov, a notable Bulgarian merchant, in order to get acquainted with the opinion of the Odessa Bulgarians on the intended uprising, as well as to collect means for armaments. The rich Odessa Bulgarian, however, refused to render any assistance. Toshkov excused himself by saying he had suffered heavy financial losses, so he could not provide any means. Under these circumstances Rakovski decided to return to Bucharest.

It is not known when exactly he reached the Romanian capital. Most probably this occurred in September, according to Hitov's memoirs, which state that the summer was coming to an end. In Bucharest Rakovski was briefed in detail about all events preceding his arrival by his friend Dimiter Diamandiev, a prominent Bucharest Bulgarian, who was a member of the Secret Bulgarian Central Committee. Rakovski immediately sought Kasabov to ask for an explanation. The latter pretended not to know anything. A stormy quarrel ensued, the result of profound ideological differences.

Rakovski did not approve of the pro-western Secret Bulgarian Central Committee, which had placed itself in a position subordinate to the Romanian government. He was indignant that the Bulgarians had been cheated into quitting their jobs in order to serve foreign interests. 'If an op-

portune moment sets in tomorrow, the people will no longer believe us, because we have deceived them many times,' declared Rakovski, having in mind his own experiences in Belgrade in 1862.

Rakovski's disappointment in failing to obtain help from abroad was deep. Having understood that one could not rely on selfless help from any of the Balkan countries' governments, Rakovski became absolutely certain that the Bulgarians could count only on their own strength. During the last year of his life he focused his attention on organizing Bulgarian detachments whose task was to cross the border, enter Bulgaria and, arms in hand, to fight the oppressor. Rakovski made a complete break with the functionaries of the Secret Central Bulgarian Committee who at first sought the cooperation of Romania and later showed a tendency towards reaching an accord with the Sublime Porte for the establishment of a dualist state. His relations with the Dobrodetelna Drouzhina and its leader Hristo Georgiev, in particular, were tense. Just then, at the suggestion of the Russian tsarist diplomats, the functionaries of the Dobrodetelna Drouzhina were trying to reach an agreement with Serbia and to create a general Yugoslav federation.

In the meantime, Rakovski prepared and wrote his Provisional Law of the Bulgarian Detachments. He endeavoured to build up a solid foundation for the activity of the detachments by taking advantage out of all his long revolutionary experience. This was Rakovski's last revolutionary plan in which he did not give up the idea of united action with the Balkan nations in the struggle against



the Ottoman Empire. Neither did he give up the idea that a careful evaluation and consideration of the international set up was necessary when taking decisions concerning the struggle of the Bulgarian people. Rakovski's Provisional Law, however, made the Bulgarian revolutionary national-liberation movement dependent only on the decisions to be taken by the lawfully established Supreme Bulgarian National Secret Civil Administration. In this way all intervention of foreign powers and governments would be abolished. The Supreme Administration was to be the sovereign central body of the Bulgarian national revolution. There is a great number of data which show that this sovereign body managed immediately to influence the rebel detachments in Bulgaria, to coordinate and centralize their activity.

That is how Rakovski spent the last months of his life. He put in all his strength and energy to organize detachments, despite his physical sufferings, caused by a perfidious illness which began tormenting him about that time. He was suffering from tuberculosis, the result of utter exhaustion caused by his excessive efforts. Rakovski was the nucleus of the revolutionary movement among the Bulgarian emigrants. He moved over to Sinest, a settlement near Bucharest. Panayot Hitov, Philip Totyo, Vassil Levski and other outstanding Bulgarian revolutionaries, leaders of the national struggle, were always with him. 'He endeavoured with all his might to help the detachments which passed through Wallachia in 1867 on their way to Turkey,' his close friend Panayot Hitov wrote about this period of

Rakovski's life. According to the veteran rebel captain, Rakovski paid no attention to the perfidious illness that was quickly overpowering him; he did not care that he had nothing to live on, but only ran from friend to friend urging, persuading, requesting help for the detachments. He also worked on his unfinished book *The Bulgarian Haiduks*, while organizing the detachments. In June he returned to the Romanian capital and settled down in the Philaret vineyards in the villa of the Mustakov brothers. His strength was rapidly failing, and at the age of only 47, he died on October 9, 1867, 2 a. m. The funeral took place on October 10, 1867. He was buried in the Bucharest cemetery Serban Vodu. Thousands of Bulgarians attended his funeral, both friends and opponents. Many Romanians, leading political functionaries, foreign diplomatic representatives were also present. They all felt that a great Bulgarian, who had created a whole epoch for his people, one who had devoted all his strength to the struggle for the liberation of his enslaved country, had passed away. He left, however, a rich literary and revolutionary heritage to serve as an example to the future generations, as well as the memory of a unique fighter, a loyal son of the Bulgarian people, and a remarkable personality.

\* \* \*

In his lifetime Rakovski experienced a lot of bitterness and privation. But although he was always restless and often persecuted, he manifested a proud and independent



character throughout his life. He was courageous, staunch, resolute and endowed with remarkable keenness of observation. Rakovski was a stranger to hypocrisy, he was sincere and straightforward. These two features were the cause of much trouble in his already hard and strenuous life. Someone once tried to make him act under pressure. Rakovski wrote about this attempt the following: 'I will never be a stooge, neither will I bow down to money! My character will stand no master... This may be a fault with me, but what can I do? I am obsessed by it, and I will carry it into my grave.' And yet, Rakovski recognized only one master — his people. No matter what he thought about this or that question, he was always ready to give in, or as he himself put it, 'I express my opinion but I am always ready to do as my people say.'

Rakovski's activity regardless of the form it assumed or the spheres in which it was exercised, was invariably permeated with the thought of liberty, of securing an independent life for the Bulgarian people. The great patriot opposed everything that hindered the realization of this sacred goal. At the same time he tried to kindle the feeling of national pride of the Bulgarians, to awaken their drowsing national consciousness, to urge them on to education and knowledge, to show them the way to progress. There was nothing loftier and dearer in the life of the ardent writer of the Bulgarian National Revival than his homeland. His love for the Bulgarian people was, as he declared before his friends, 'an incurable ulcer in the heart.' Rakovski devoted all his strength in service to the people,

having abandoned all thoughts of a family of his own, of a home, of a peaceful life. A time for his personal happiness could come only when the nation whom Rakovski treasured above all in his life, gained its liberty. Rakovski's existence and needs, the sufferings and aspirations of the Bulgarian people had merged into one. He lived with the people's joys and sorrows, with their failures and successes. According to Rakovski, love for the homeland 'excels all the universal virtues, and is the most comforting thought a man has in this world...' It is this thought that gives strength to man to endure all kinds of sufferings, to give everything most precious he has to the world, even his life.

Rakovski's whole activity is a proof of the sincerity and depth of his devoted love for the Homeland.

The more he loved the Bulgarian people, the stronger Rakovski hated their enemies. Foreign or native, they always incurred his hatred. He used all his abilities and strength to fight them. Rakovski considered as his personal enemy every one who oppressed and robbed his people directly or indirectly, everyone who hampered their development, who created obstacles on the road to their freedom.

The ardent patriot's attitude towards everyone was determined not by his personal feelings and preferences, but by the interests of the Bulgarian people, by everyone's attitude towards the struggle of the Bulgarians for liberation.

It is on the basis of his character, of his love for his country, his aspiration for freedom that Rakovski built his



ideology. His views were formed under the then existing situation and were based on concrete circumstances.

The objective historical setting determined the character and tasks of the Bulgarian national revolution. The Bulgarian people suffered from both national and social tyranny. An instrument of national tyranny, the Turkish despotic feudal system was at the same time an instrument of social tyranny, too. The struggle against it was not only a struggle for national liberation but also for social liberation. Therefore, a national democratic revolution was indispensable, i. e. the abolition of foreign national tyranny which would at the same time bring about liberation from the chains of Turkish feudalism.

The cultural revolution of the Bulgarian people, their struggle for national church independence, for a Bulgarian school, was going on parallel with this process. The building up of Bulgarian education had a profoundly democratic character. Together with the establishment of church independence, the cultural revolution created prerequisites for reising the political consciousness of the Bulgarian people, for overcoming the spirit of slavery, for the formation of a people's intelligentsia, who had to take afterwards their place in the leadership of the national democratic revolution. Unlike the liberal enlighteners, Rakovski did not regard the church question and that of education as an ultimate goal, but as a means, as a phase in the struggle for liberation.

Rakovski believed in the revolutionary spirit of the Bulgarian people. He had first of all in mind the peasants,

because they comprised the bulk of the population of Bulgaria at that time. In his papers he wrote repeatedly about their condition. He published dozens of articles and reports about their misery, about the violence they were subjected to. Rakovski defended their interests. In the peasants he saw the mass foundation of the Bulgarian national revolution. They were the people he relied on when drafting his Plan for the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1861. Later on, during the struggles for agrarian reforms in Romania, Rakovski expressed his views on the settlement of agrarian relations in Romania which were the same as those with regard to Bulgaria: only a distribution of the land among the peasants and the granting to them full rights could secure social progress.

His hopes of rousing the Bulgarian people Rakovski pinned on the rebel detachments. He was the first in our history who came forward with the idea that a politically defined goal had to be set to our liberation movement. Not isolated haiduk raids for personal revenge, but organized rebel detachments for the liberation of the Bulgarian people — that is what Rakovski championed. Under his influence many of the old haiduks gave up their individual raids and became conscious fighters for national liberation.

Rakovski was convinced that the liberation of the Bulgarian people could be achieved through a nationwide armed struggle. Therefore, it was quite natural that he paid special attention to the formation of the people's armed forces, which were to carry out the struggle against the still strong Ottoman Empire. He worked out A Provisional



Law for the People's Forest Detachments, dated January 1, 1867 which called for adamant discipline, honesty, obedience, giving up drinking, lying and stealing — all of these being vices capable of reducing their fighting efficiency. Rakovski also raised the question of a unified central leadership of the liberation struggle, so necessary for the success of every struggle. However, he paid inadequate attention to the necessity of a preliminary and overall preparation of the masses within the country, of a preliminary popular unity of mind which should precede the outbreak of every uprising. The lack of an organized revolutionary network in contact with the masses inside the country doomed to failure any kind of struggle regardless of the thorough training of the military detachments which Rakovski thought of sending across the border from abroad.

Rakovski had a realistic outlook on life. He followed with utmost vigilance both the home and foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire and tried to act according to the concrete conditions and possibilities. He often resorted to compromises, to be able to adapt himself to the existing reality. He was an experienced politician-realist, who watched the situation around him with a great deal of consideration and understanding, and encouraged the outbreak of a revolt only when favourable prerequisites for success were on hand. When such conditions were non-existent, he tried to ward off any hasty struggle which would only harm the liberation cause. Rakovski advocated a wisely and carefully considered struggle, and not a plunging into insane adven-

tures which would bring only ruin. He wrote about himself, confessing that 'many times he had suffered due to such insane struggles, as a result of which he had lost the prime of his youth in grim dungeons.'

Rakovski was a born politician. He realized at an early age the necessity of joint action of the enslaved Balkan nations against the rule of the Sultan. He understood perfectly well that it was only with their joint efforts that the Balkan nations could cope with the power of the centuries-old empire. This conviction had a strong hold on Rakovski, and the ardent Bulgarian patriot strove with all his energy and will to bring about unity of action.

He tried in succession to show to the Serbs, the Greeks and the Romanians how advantageous their cooperation was to all of them. In the pursuit of his convictions Rakovski was many times disappointed. He changed his methods, he sought ever new opportunities, until he finally came to the conclusion that the Bulgarian people should rely, above all, on their own strength. Nevertheless, even to the end of his life, Rakovski never gave up the idea of building up an alliance of the Balkan nations. His personal experience, however, taught him that that could never be realized through an alliance of governments, of rulers. It could be achieved only through an alliance of the peoples themselves. In this respect Rakovski stands out as the first Bulgarian functionary on a Balkan scale: his ideas along these lines helped the development of Bulgarian revolutionary ideology. His quests, even his vagaries of mind, were of great importance for the advancement of the Bulgarian



national-liberation movement. Rakovski followed the moves of the Western Powers on the Balkans with keen interest, having rightly evaluated the tremendous significance of the policy of these Powers with regard to the Eastern Question as well as its influence on the struggle of the Bulgarians for freedom.

He was disappointed at the hostile attitude of the West towards the peoples fighting for their rights, for gaining their independence. The help rendered to the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War filled Rakovski with indignation. Following closely the policy of the Western Powers, Rakovski noted that it had in it neither love of mankind, nor love of one's fellow-creatures, nor faith, and that it was full of 'self-interest and personal benefits. The right of the stronger ruled!' The assertion of these Powers that their policy was aimed only at maintaining peace in Europe, which was in the interests of all nations, were a phoney excuse, a false cover under which their selfish interests were lurking, something which only inexperienced politicians believed in.

Rakovski's attitude towards Russia, however, that brotherly country which had made the utmost contribution to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, was entirely different. In 1853 he organized a wide network of plotters to help the oncoming Russian army, bringing freedom. His confidence in Russia was clearly manifested in his early work *Gorski Putnik*, published after the Crimean War. 'The North,' he wrote in this narrative poem, 'will render help...' Rakovski has added some explanatory notes to his narrative

poem, pointing out that the hopes of the Bulgarian people for liberation were linked with Russia's victory over Turkey. The same conviction has been expressed in some other works of Rakovski. In a letter dating from 1858 to a well known Bulgarian in Petersburg he wrote that in looking for help Bulgaria could direct her eyes only towards Russia, towards the country 'which, with unspeakable bravery and countless victims, at different periods, liberated the whole world from the ruthless scourge of Ottoman barbarity and violence.' Rakovski's entire policy was permeated with his confidence in the liberating mission of the great Slav country.

Rakovski's love for the brotherly Russian people was profound. His attitude, however, to Russian tsarism was different. Rakovski got in touch with progressive Russian circles, sharing their views, already during his stay in Odessa. He also had a definite attitude towards the tsarist administration, with which he had clashed several times. Hristo R. Stoyanov, a friend from Sofia, with whom Rakovski exchanged letters, wrote to him commenting on the tsarist administration the following: 'The lava that will engulf the tyrants here is ready to burst forth; it is only waiting for the opportune moment.' Rakovski, for example was acquainted with Herzen's activity. The Polish functionary K. Turczikowski had sent him a letter, dated April 28, 1858, in which he recommended him to establish contact with the prominent Russian revolutionary-democrat, which would be in the interest of the Bulgarian cause. Rakovski got more information about Herzen in a letter



sent to him from Paris by the Bulgarian G. Vulkovich, who was studying there, and had got a suitable fellow-countryman of his to contribute to Herzen's newspaper 'Kolokol' on problems concerning Bulgaria.

Rakovski responded readily to every struggle for freedom all over the world. Hundreds of despatches could be found in the pages of his papers about the efforts of various nations fighting for their independence. It was as early as 1857 that he published in *Bulgarska Dnevitsa* a series of reports about the struggles of the Indian people, about their resistance to the oppressor. More than 100 years ago he wrote in his paper: 'India must belong to the peoples of India, not to England. Sooner or later, this must be so!'

The national-liberation movements in Europe were of great significance for the events on the Balkans. It was about this time that the Italian people were fighting for their liberation and unification. Rakovski followed with undisguised sympathy this struggle directed also against the Basburg monarchy. He thought that the Italians could not be vanquished, because they were fighting for their just cause, for their liberty. Meanwhile, the Hungarians were also getting indignant against the same oppressor — the Austrians. Any loosening of Austrian rule had immediate repercussions on the Balkan Peninsula. Rakovski detected a similarity in the struggle of the nations enslaved by the Austrian Empire — a protector of Turkey, on the one hand, and the struggle of the enslaved nations within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, on the other. Naturally, he

sided with the Italians and the Hungarians: theirs was a just struggle, and their interests coincided with those of the Bulgarians. Rakovski associated the plans for joint actions of the nations fighting against the Austrian sovereignty with the struggles of the Balkan nations. He spoke with strongly emphasized admiration of 'the hero', 'the liberator of Italy', 'the valiant Garibaldi'. The Bulgarian revolutionary wrote about Garibaldi with undisguised enthusiasm the following: 'This rare citizen of the world will accept no medals and titles, no rewards or ranks; he remains only with his own name of Garibaldi, and this name is superior to all medals and titles.'

Rakovski wrote that 'today slavery and absolutism are tolerated nowhere, freedom is struggling everywhere, demanding recognition of its natural origin.' He raised high the slogan for the right of the nations themselves to settle their own affairs; he was against foreign intervention, against autocracy. Rakovski never missed the opportunity to write in his works words of admiration and praise for such fighters for freedom as Herzen, Mazzini, Kosuth, Klapka, Carlo Pizakane. Even the fate of the black peoples of Africa, so little known to the Bulgarians at that time, attracted his attention and evoked his indignation at their ruthless exploitation.

The time when Rakovski lived — the nineteenth century — was characterized by a general outburst of nationalism. The great Bulgarian patriot was, to some extent, no exception to the epoch he lived in. His nationalism, however, was of a specific nature. He regarded the struggle against the



assimilative encroachments of foreign propaganda connected with the armed struggle against foreign domination as the only way of achieving the political, cultural and economic liberation of the Bulgarian people. At the same time, however, he respected and recognized the right of every people to settle their own affairs. 'Our principle is,' he wrote, 'to honour and respect all nationalities and make an alliance with them when they are sincere and just, i.e. when they recognize their joint obligations to us.' An alliance among the nations, according to Rakovski, must rest only on the basis of complete religious tolerance, freedom and equality of rights. Rakovski never went too far in his attacks even when he had to beat off some hostile manifestations towards the Bulgarians. He was always respectful to the other nations.

The great Bulgarian patriot knew that both national and feudal oppression should be done away with simultaneously. Objectively, this was the task of the forthcoming decisive struggle of the Bulgarian people — a national bourgeois-democratic revolution — and that was Rakovski's goal. He manifested a correct understanding of the economic development of the Bulgarian people. He wanted the abolition of Ottoman feudalism, crippling the strength of the Bulgarians, and its replacement by more progressive capitalist relations. Because of this, he strove for more material benefits for his fellow countrymen. He believed that that was a prerequisite for a better future of his country. That is why Rakovski greeted enthusiastically every major economic initiative in Bulgaria, such as the set-

ting up of new Bulgarian trading firms and industrial enterprises, the consolidation and modernization of production, etc. According to Rakovski, the people would in this way gather more strength to defend their lawful rights. The Bulgarian patriot, however, clashed quite frequently. because of his convictions, with the inconstancy and hypocrisy of a number of representatives of the Bulgarian big bourgeoisie, with their claims to take over the leadership of the nation's affairs and to conduct them according to their selfish interests.

Rakovski, the convinced champion of the revolutionary struggle, never during his whole life underestimated any effort aimed at church independence or at the promotion of the nation's culture. He devoted a considerable part of his struggle and attention to the struggle against the Istanbul Greek Patriarchate. He worked with great ardour for national education, for Bulgarian schools, for a national periodical press and literature. It was in the combination of ways and means in the struggle for the ultimate goal that Rakovski demonstrated his both complex and integrated personality. Rakovski who was an all out revolutionary, evaluated exactly the significance of the church as an important national institution under the conditions prevailing in the Ottoman Empire. He had a clear vision of how important the church was for the people's education, for the development of their culture. The educational, cultural and political development of the Bulgarians, according to Rakovski, represented a process of three inseparably linked phases. It was this concept that



made him stand out as a mature politician who managed to balance the various manifestations of national feeling, to draw the correct lines they should follow and to utilize them skilfully according to the requirements of the time. He never stopped half-way in his aspirations. Only church or only educational autonomy did not satisfy him. He fought for total freedom. His entire activity was subordinated to his main goal: to gain political independence.

Rakovski, however, was not a narrow-minded dogmatist. On the contrary, his actions and works reveal him as a genuine statesman, capable of comprehending the manifestations of the people's life and spirit, in all their broadness and complexity, to orient himself correctly in their diversity, to unite and subordinate them to one thought, without neglecting a single opportunity, without underestimating a single sphere of people's manifestations.

Rakovski, with his concepts and activity, managed to raise the Bulgarian national-liberation movement to a new, higher stage. His premature death deprived him of the opportunity to see the ultimate development of his concepts. Nevertheless, he paved the way for the next titans of the Bulgarian struggle, Karavelov, Levski, Botev. The outstanding Bulgarian historian, Academician Dimiter Kossev, has now made a thorough analysis of Rakovski's concepts. He writes the following: "The basic principles of his ideology are: his faith in the power of the people, in their revolutionary potential, as well as his concept that the peasants are the motive force of the revolution, his concept that Bulgarian society after the liberation would be built-up

on the principles of equality and freedom, with no privileges, a society in which those who till the land will own it; his negative attitude towards the chorbadjis, his conviction that no reforms could consolidate the Sultan's feudal-despotic system from which the Bulgarian people could save themselves only by a revolution; his idea of a fraternal alliance among the Balkan nations, his solidarity with all nations fighting at that time for national and social liberation. These were the foundations and lasting principles of Rakovski's ideology and undoubtedly, they depict him as a revolutionary democrat.'

Both the life and the activity of Rakovski arouse even today respect and veneration. The life of the Bulgarian people was indissolubly linked with the activity of the great Bulgarian patriot for nearly three decades. There was not a single event since the '40s of the past century until his death in 1867, in which he did not participate, or did not speak or write about it in his books, in his articles. The struggles of the Bulgarians during these thirty years were reflected as in a focus in Rakovski's personality. He responded to each national need and anguish.

Rakovski possessed an iron will. He was courageous and resolute, straightforward in words and actions, alien to any hypocrisy. He was never dejected and he never despaired, although he went through a great deal of suffering; he spent many years in the grim Turkish dungeons; he was constantly persecuted, he was always on the move. His indomitable faith in the strength of the people, in their bright future helped him to sustain the morale of his fellow



countrymen, to inspire them with resoluteness; he pointed out their future which could be attained through their joint efforts. Rakovski's whole work reflects one thought, one desire: to achieve the liberation of the Bulgarian people. All of Rakovski's actions were subordinated to his basic task: to prepare the Bulgarians for a struggle against foreign oppression, to make them regain their self-respect and to become conscious fighters for freedom. It was not accidental that, despite the rules of Bulgarian orthography, he always wrote 'Bulgarian' with a capital B.

Georgi Stoikov Rakovski will forever remain in the memory of the generations as a passionate enlightener, a valiant warrior standing at his post against all enemies of his people, an ardent patriot who headed a whole generation of national-liberation fighters. His feverish activity paved the way for the next leaders of the national liberation movement, of the April uprising and of the freedom which came with the victorious Russian troops only ten years after his death.

In 1866 Rakovski began writing his autobiography. Having had a stormy life, full of events, he found it difficult to describe what he had lived through. 'The most difficult thing in the world for a conscientious man is to talk about himself, let alone to write about his own actions and life,' wrote this great patriot. Rakovski found only one justification for his decision to describe his life: all his actions were closely linked with the Homeland, 'which ever since my youth, I have loved passionately, to which I have wanted, of my own will, to devote my whole life.'

According to Rakovski, the reader of such a biography would not find an amusing narrative interwoven with 'events fabricated by a keen imagination, adorned with love adventures, nor with some great and exclusive feats described skilfully and made to sound plausible.' Rakovski's biography can only show of what significance for every man is his love for the people, when this love has become the essence of his being; how such a love, which has become the meaning of his life, can give him strength to endure all persecutions, sufferings and privations.

Rakovski, a representative of the Bulgarian National Revival, and others like him, stand out as examples to be followed by scores of revolutionaries and public figures, the builders of Bulgaria today, liberated long ago from foreign tyranny and, in recent times, also from social oppression. Rakovski's work is highly esteemed in his Homeland which, under the guidance of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and with the joint efforts of the whole Bulgarian people, is now becoming a developed socialist country.



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